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EXPAND ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE TO BETTER SERVE BLACK STUDENT FATHERS

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One of the greatest flaws in the American higher education system is that it caters to students matriculating straight from high school and fails to account for the diverse lived experiences and backgrounds of all students. Student parents strive to better provide for their families by pursuing a postsecondary education and make up nearly 20 percent of undergraduate students in the United States.¹ These students face many obstacles to completing college, including paying for child care. They are also less likely than other students to complete college,² more likely live in poverty,³ have fewer resources to devote to college costs,⁴ and incur more student loan debt than non-parents.⁵ Student parents also spend significant time providing care for their dependents, with 55 percent of student parents working 25 hours or more per week.⁶ In 2020, nearly 12 million parents across the United States held college credits but no credential and were not actively enrolled in a postsecondary program.⁷

The failure of the postsecondary educational system to support students in balancing academic and familial obligations is one contributing factor to the continued decline in postsecondary enrollment among Black males in recent years.⁸ Black undergraduate students are more likely to be parents (30 percent) compared to white students (17 percent).⁹ In particular, Black student fathers comprise 19 percent of student parents¹⁰ and are less likely than their peers to have access to public benefits programs like child care assistance.¹¹

WHAT IS CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE?

Child care assistance aids parents and families in managing costs through subsidizing care or directly providing care for no cost or significantly reduced cost. For parents who are completing a postsecondary education, the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) programs are valuable lifelines to accessing affordable child care. CCDF is the largest source of federal funding for child care and provides child care subsidies to families with lower incomes through a federal-state partnership. CCAMPIS is a grant program specifically designed to support parenting students with lower incomes through increasing campus-based child care options that meet their needs.

Limited accessibility to supportive services that assist student parents in managing the demands of postsecondary education while meeting the needs of their families is a key contributor to the disparate educational and economic outcomes of Black student fathers. Seventy-two percent of all Black student fathers attending public four-year institutions leave college without earning a degree or other credential, which is a rate higher than all undergraduate students (32 percent), student parents (52 percent), overall single student parents (54 percent), and overall Black student parents (58 percent).¹² Regardless of completion, 81 percent of Black student fathers rely on loans to pay tuition, placing them at increased risk of falling into the educational debt trap experienced by millions of Americans.¹³

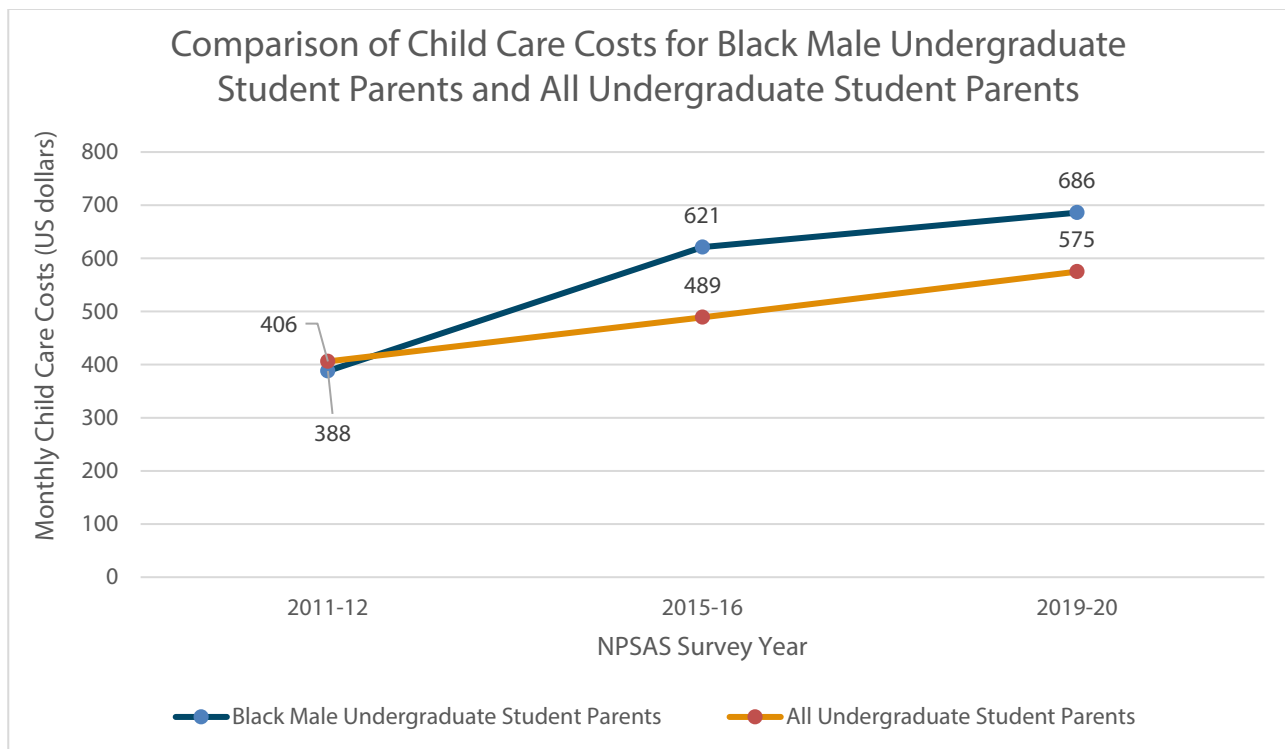
BLACK STUDENT FATHERS FACE SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO COMPLETING A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

The current postsecondary education system doesn't adequately support Black student fathers. They must balance the responsibilities of being a student, a father, and an employee, all while confronting harmful societal stereotypes and policy-driven disparities that hinder their completion of postsecondary education.¹⁴ These challenges frequently cause Black student fathers to make the difficult decision to exit their educational programs before completion, resulting in them being burdened with student loan debt without the corresponding educational credential that can provide economic security.

- Black student fathers are logging more work hours per week than the average student parent (31.1 hours per week vs. 27.5 hours), leading to less available time for studying and connecting with other peers.¹⁵
- Fifty-four percent of Black student fathers received Pell grants as part of their financial aid package, slightly lower than the 57 percent for all student parents.¹⁶
- Black student fathers on average owe \$16,126 from their undergraduate loans, which is higher than the \$14,153 average for all student parents.¹⁷

Black student fathers experience basic needs insecurity that impacts their ability to successfully complete their postsecondary education. The pandemic exposed the inconsistent ability of these students to meet their basic needs. The 2020 #RealCollege survey conducted by Temple University’s Hope Center found that only 60 percent of single Black fathers experiencing basic needs insecurity reported using public benefits, and the usage rates of specific campus-based supportive services among the same population was only 34 percent.¹⁸ Especially concerning is child care assistance, and this is an area where policymakers can effectively intervene and assist Black student fathers. The COVID-19 pandemic made finding affordable high-quality child care options more difficult for Black student fathers. Among single Black student fathers in fall 2020, only 12 percent of survey respondents used child care assistance.¹⁹ Twenty-six percent of Black student fathers expressed difficulty finding safe and stable child care during the pandemic,²⁰ while 40 percent of Black student fathers experienced job loss, pay cuts, or reduced work hours during the pandemic.²¹

Consistent access to affordable child care options is only one of the financial obstacles for student parents in completing a postsecondary education regardless of demographic. The out-of-pocket costs of attending a public college for a parenting student are two to five times higher on average than for students with no children.²² Between the 2011-2012 and 2019-2020 academic years, the average monthly costs of child care for Black student fathers rose from \$388 to nearly \$686, increasing the cost gap between Black student parents and all other student parents from approximately \$18 per month in 2011-2012 to over \$100 per month in 2019-2020.²³ The net price of a college education takes up on average just under 44 percent of the income of a Black student father, so additional increases in child care costs make continuing their education a difficult financial path.²⁴



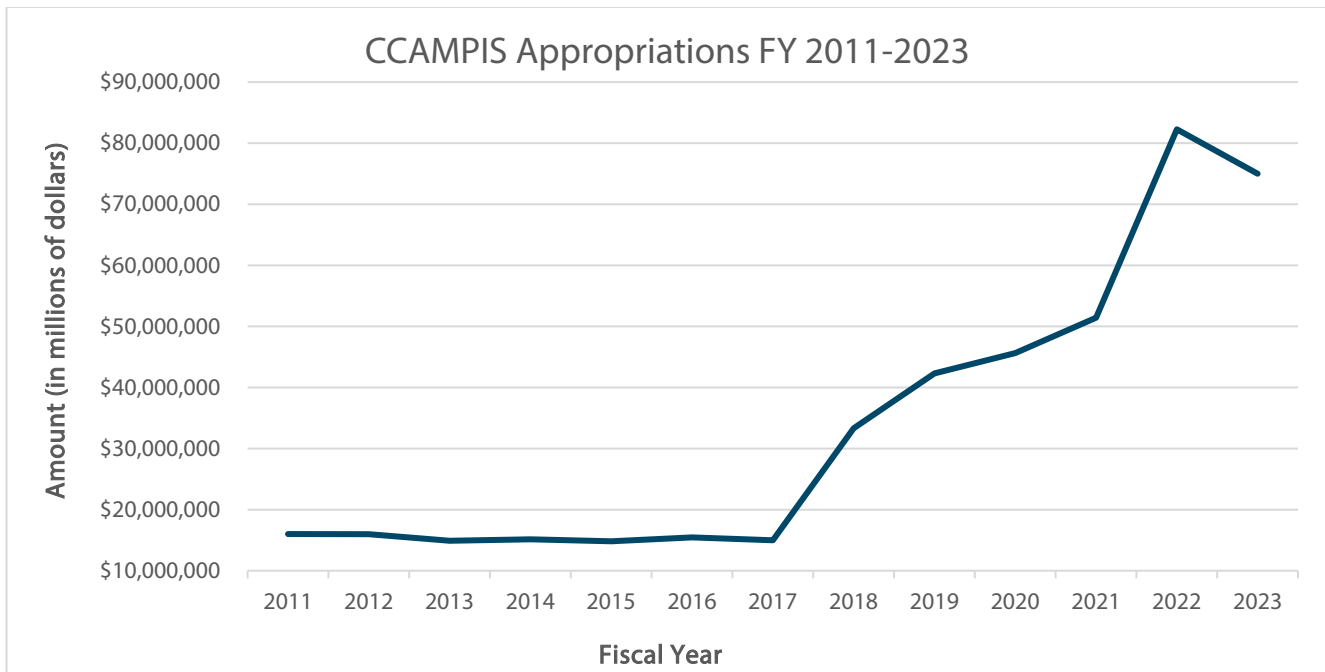
Source: Center for Law and Social Policy analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2020 Undergraduate Students (NPSAS:UG).

Having a variety of child care options available to parenting students is important to making sure they can find care that is affordable, provides their children with safe and healthy learning environments, and meets the unique scheduling needs that come with being a postsecondary student. A rising issue for all parenting students, and especially Black student fathers, is the shrinking number of child care options. Availability of on-campus child care has fallen for the better part of two decades, with only 43 percent of public colleges and 20 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) having on-campus care available.²⁵ More than 59 percent of total Black male undergraduates and 67 percent of Black student fathers attend institutions that do not have on-campus child care options, which increases the difficulty of finding care options that can accommodate the schedule of an active student.²⁶

CCAMPIS AND CCDF CAN SUPPORT STUDENT PARENTS IN ACCESSING, AFFORDING, AND COMPLETING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

The CCDF program provides child care subsidies to families with low incomes through a federal-state partnership. States have flexibility under CCDF to develop child care policies that best suit the needs of children and parents as long as they still comply with federal parameters. States can choose to use CCDF to support student parents in meeting their basic needs and many, though not all, allow access for student parents. Nationally, 6 percent of CCDF families receive child care services due to participation in training and education programs.²⁷ However, CCAMPIS is the only grant program specifically designed to support student parents with low incomes who are pursuing postsecondary education with funding for child care services. CCAMPIS helped roughly 3,300 students who were parents pay for child care.²⁸ However, more than 4,200 children were still on the waiting list to receive child care.²⁹ Even though CCAMPIS recipients received about \$385 per month in CCAMPIS subsidies, over 75 percent of student parents still had to pay a median out-of-pocket expense of \$160 per month for child care services.³⁰

CCAMPIS funding must increase to meet the needs of student parents so that they do not have to incur these out-of-pocket expenses. Between FY2011 and FY2017, the CCAMPIS program was funded at levels between \$14-16 million. In FY2018, CCAMPIS funding more than doubled to \$33 million and continued to increase until it peaked in FY2022 at \$82 million.³¹ However, FY2023 funding levels dropped by \$7 million compared to FY2022. The House's FY2024 Appropriations bill would roll back progress made on CCAMPIS by eliminating the program.³² The funding levels proposed in the Senate FY2024 Appropriations bill is \$80 million (a \$5 million increase from FY2023), but this is still insufficient to support student parents with child care services. Indeed, additional funding is needed to expand the program to more student parents.³³ Advocates are pushing to increase CCAMPIS funding to \$500 million to ensure that approximately 100,000 student parents, still only a small fraction of this population, can receive the child care assistance they need.³⁴



Source: “Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program,” U.S. Department of Education, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/campisp/funding.html>.

CCAMPIS AND CCDF CAN HELP INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADDRESS THE DEMAND FOR CHILD CARE.

Institutions of higher education can use CCAMPIS funding to expand on-campus child care, offer drop-in child care services, and help students pay for child care services provided by off-campus centers.³⁵ The persistence rate for students participating in the CCAMPIS program was 82 percent in the 2016-2017 academic year, indicating that affordable child care options are essential to support student parents in their postsecondary journey.³⁶

CCDF funding is another important child care assistance program available to help parents with low incomes pay for child care. Unfortunately, due to historic underfunding, CCDF only reaches one in six eligible children, making it difficult to meet the needs of all eligible families.³⁷ In an effort to expand access to CCDF to student parents, states should consider reducing the program’s eligibility restrictions. This can include removing the requirement to work while in school, eliminating the need to enroll in a particular number of courses, reducing the documentation burden, not requiring child care to align with days and hours of school participation, and removing limitations on how long student parents can attend school or the degree they can attain.³⁸

What is truly needed to address both the challenges outlined here and broader barriers are significant and sustainable investments in a comprehensive child care system that is designed to meet the needs of children, parents, and families. Absent this comprehensive system, policymakers should consider increasing funding for CCDF and CCAMPIS to support student parents, especially those with low incomes, in returning to college, helping them stay enrolled, and completing their postsecondary education. Increasing investments in affordable high-quality child care through programs like CCAMPIS and CCDF will help institutions of higher education offer better support to college students with children and improve their economic security.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Center for Law and Social Policy analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2020 Undergraduate Students (NPSAS:UG).
- ² Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Amanda Hare, et al., "Evaluating the Role of Campus Child Care in Student Parent Success: Challenges and Opportunities for Rigorous Study," Institute for Women's Policy Research, October 2021, https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Evaluating-the-Role-of-Campus-Child-Care_FINAL.pdf.
- ³ Brittani Williams, Jinann Bitar, Portia Polk, et al., "For Student Parents, The Biggest Hurdles to A Higher Education are Costs and Finding Child Care," The Education Trust, August 2022, <https://edtrust.org/resource/for-student-parents-the-biggest-hurdles-to-a-higher-education-are-costs-and-finding-child-care/>.
- ⁴ "Helping Young Parents Succeed in College and Life," Annie E. Casey Foundation, October 2021, <https://www.aecf.org/blog/helping-young-parents-succeed-in-college>.
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- ⁷ Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Susana Contreras Mendez, and Tessa Holtzman, "Prioritizing Student Parents in COVID-19 Response and Relief: Recommendations for Federal and State Policy," Institute for Women's Policy Research, July 2020, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Prioritizing-Student-Parents-in-COVID-19-v2-4.pdf>.
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- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Gregory Kienzl, Pei Hu, Ali Caccavella, et al., "Parenting While in College: Racial Disparities in Basic Needs Insecurity During the Pandemic," The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, February 2022, https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/PWIC_Final_2.9.pdf.
- ¹² Susana Contreras-Mendez and Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, "Busy with Purpose: Lessons for Education and Policy Leaders from Returning Student Parents," Institute for Women's Policy Research, March 2021, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Busy-With-Purpose-v2b.pdf>.
- ¹³ Afet Dundar, Lauren Tighe, and Jennifer Turner, "Underwater: Student Mothers and Fathers Struggle to Support Their Families and Pay Off College Loans," Institute for Women's Policy Research, February 2022, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Underwater-Student-Mothers-and-Fathers-Struggle-to-Support-Their-Families-and-Pay-Off-College-Loans-FINAL.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ R.N. Roy, T.L. Brown, A. Hailey, et al., "The Experiences of Hispanic and African American Student-Fathers on College Campuses," Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15381927221137690>.
- ¹⁵ Center for Law and Social Policy analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2020 Undergraduate Students (NPSAS:UG).
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Gregory Kienzl, Pei Hu, Ali Caccavella, et al., "Parenting While in College: Racial Disparities in Basic Needs Insecurity During the Pandemic," The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, February 2022, https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/PWIC_Final_2.9.pdf.
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- ²¹ Ibid.
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²⁸ Melissa Emrey-Arras, "More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid," Government Accountability Office, August 2019, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-522.pdf>.

²⁹ Ibid.

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³² "APLU CGA FY2024 Appropriations Priorities," Association of Public and Land Grant Universities, 2023, https://www.aplu.org/wp-content/uploads/FY2024-Appropriations-Chart-Omnibus-tentative-1.pdf?mkt_tok=NjAzLVSVy0xMjcAAAGNKFMVof3uWWHMIpu9Wj5QIWIYAnaOVVy6tyN9iqCEZkzKgg20nZ4tr0v7xhazLKapD4DS0yugdAWJwlhFM2ZFDi-20ex8mmE5fEifvbvhw.

³³ "Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 2024," U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, July 2023, https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy_24_lhhs_report.pdf.

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³⁵ Adam K. Edgerton, "Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS): In Brief," Congressional Research Service, February 2013, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47422>.

³⁶ Melissa Emrey-Arras, "More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid," Government Accountability Office, August 2019, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-522.pdf>.

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