

**REPRESENTATION IN
THE 119TH CONGRESS**

Representatives Britany Patterson (D-CO), Anna Paulina Luna (R-FL) outside the Capitol after introducing the Proxy Voting for New Parents Resolution.

Politics of Parenthood

contents

Introduction	3
About	4
Key Findings	5
Part 1: Parenthood in the 119th Congress	6
Parenthood Overview	7
Part 2: Demographics	18
Representation: Demographics	19
Moms of Adult Children	21
Single Parents	22
Part 3: State by State Overview of Parents in Congress	23
State Overview	24
Conclusion	26
Recommendations	27
Endnotes	28

introduction

For a democracy to thrive, diverse lived experiences are needed to bring new perspectives to the policymaking process. The 119th Congress indicates a shifting demographic landscape in the highest legislative body in the United States. It is the most racially diverse Congress in history, with a steady increase in non-white legislators since the 109th Congress. Baby Boomers no longer hold a majority, and the average representative age has slightly declined to 57.5. The first transgender representative was sworn into the 119th Congress.¹ Women's representation has remained steady at 28.2% over the past four years—the highest in history—yet it has stagnated for the first time since the 111th Congress.²

Political scholarship has documented why political representation is critical for a democracy to thrive. It is essential to have the voices of historically underrepresented groups, and parents of young children are no exception. Our findings show that mothers of children under 18 remain severely underrepresented in Congress. In 2023, Vote Mama Foundation published groundbreaking data showing that moms of minor children made up less than 7% of the 118th Congress. This report builds on those findings and reveals an 8.3% increase in representation—a meaningful shift, even as overall numbers remain low.

In the 119th Congress, moms of minor children now make up 7.2% of all members, underscoring both the progress and the persistent gap in representation.

In this iteration of Vote Mama Foundation's *Politics of Parenthood* report series, we provide an updated analysis of the parenthood status of all members of the 119th Congress with updated demographic profiles. We also provide recommendations for ways Congress can be a more family-friendly institution where caregivers can effectively represent their communities.

about

data & methodology

In 2022, Vote Mama Foundation launched *Politics of Parenthood*, a research series focused on the political participation of mothers in the United States. The series' first report sought to answer a seemingly simple question: how many mothers with kids under 18 are serving in state legislatures and Congress? With no other organization collecting information on the representation of parents in office, this question proved difficult to answer. Vote Mama Foundation has finally addressed this gap in research, with *Politics of Parenthood*, we have created the first comprehensive data set. This report is the second installment of the federal *Politics of Parenthood* report, with data to reflect the parenthood status of all members of the 119th Congress, in addition to other demographic variables. Our goal is to provide a nuanced analysis of how parenthood intersects with other identities and to provide an intersectional look at caregiving and serving in Congress.

We collected parenthood status and demographic data on all 541 members of Congress (including non-voting members) using a variety of publicly available sources, including self-identification statements by the officeholder. Key sources include the Congressional Biographical Directory, Center for American Women in Politics, Ballotpedia, Vote Smart, and Victory Institute. Other sources that were critical to our research include official legislator biographies, candidate websites, and legislators' public social media accounts. We used a multiple-source verification process for coding by cross referencing legislator biographies, social media, and news articles for each demographic characteristic researched. We also coordinated with current members of Congress to verify our data. We define **parents of minor children** as individuals with biological, foster, step, and formally or informally adopted children under the age of 18. We are confident that our data is as comprehensive and accurate as possible.

organization & team

Vote Mama Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, is the leading source of research and analysis on the political participation of moms. We are normalizing moms running for office, breaking the barriers they face, and building a political system that is truly family-friendly.

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key findings

Just 7.2%

of members of the 119th Congress are moms of minor children, which marks an **8.3%** increase from the 118th Congress.

Dads outnumber moms

3:1 among parents of minor children and **9:1** among parents with kids under six.

There are 3x more

men named John/Jon in the U.S. Senate than there are moms of minors. Only **4.0%** of senators are moms of minor children.

69.2%

of moms of minors are Democrats.

61.3%

of dads of minors are Republicans.

3.0%

of Congressmembers are moms of color with minor children.

Gen X

is the majority of parents of minors for both men and women, outnumbering their younger counterparts.

Representation remains extremely low

for single parents and LGBTQ+ parents:

- **One** LGBTQ+ parent of minor children.
- **Nine** single parents of minor children.
- **Four** single moms of minor children.

29 states

have **zero** moms of minor children representing them in Congress.

Part 1:

Parenthood in the 119th Congress

parenthood overview

Research shows that women often wait to run for office until their children are grown³ and are less likely to run if they are the primary breadwinners in their households.⁴ But what about when moms do serve in Congress? Bryant and Hellwege (2019) found that from 1973 - 2013, moms were more likely to sponsor legislation supporting children's welfare and families than were women without children.⁵ This type of advocacy—driven by lived experience—is known as *substantive representation* and is essential to a truly representative democracy. Having the perspectives of people who understand the experiences of parenthood is essential to uplifting the voices of parents and caregivers everywhere. The United States is the only industrialized country with no paid family leave policy,⁶ and it has the worst maternal mortality rate in the industrialized world.⁷ Two-thirds of working families rely on childcare for their children. In 41 states and D.C., the average cost of center-based infant care exceeds the annual cost of in-state college tuition,⁸ and half of Americans live in a childcare desert.⁹

Legislators legislate based on their lived experience. If we want to change our policies, we need to change our policymakers, but to do that we need to change our political system.

7.2% of the 119th Congress is made up of moms with minor children, representing an 8.3% increase since the 118th Congress.¹⁰ Comparatively, dads with minor children comprise 22.9% of the 119th Congress.

To put this in perspective, there are nearly three times more men named John/Jon in the Senate as there are moms of minor children.

In the United States, 18% of the adult population is moms of minor children and 15% is dads of minor children.¹¹ Our findings show that among all members of Congress, dads of minors are overrepresented compared to the population, while moms of minors are underrepresented at about half the rate of the population.



figure 1:

parents of minor children as a percentage of all congressional seats

*including the six non-voting delegates from U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

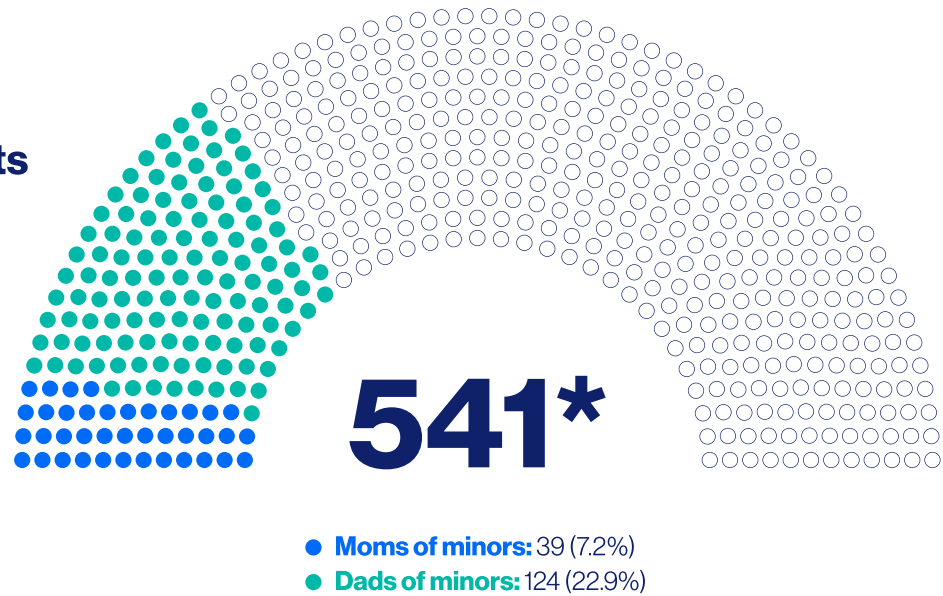
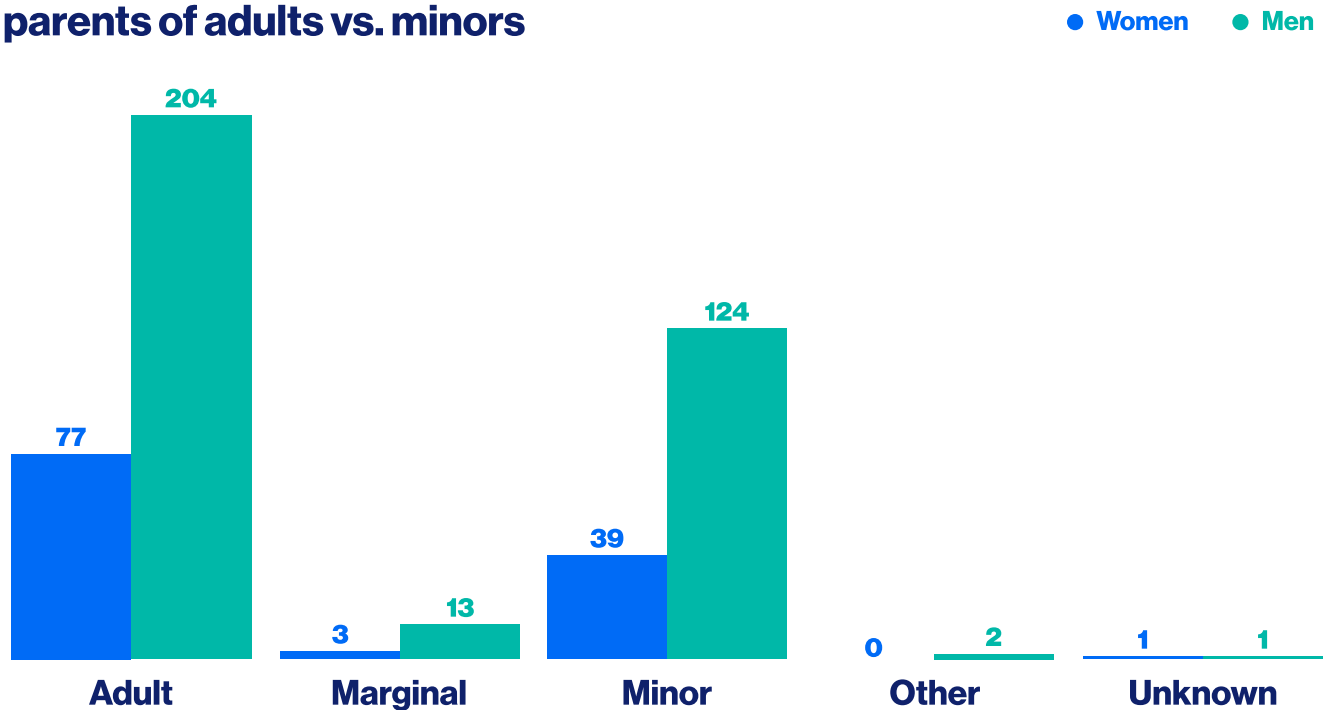


figure 2:

parents of adults vs. minors



changes from the 118th congress

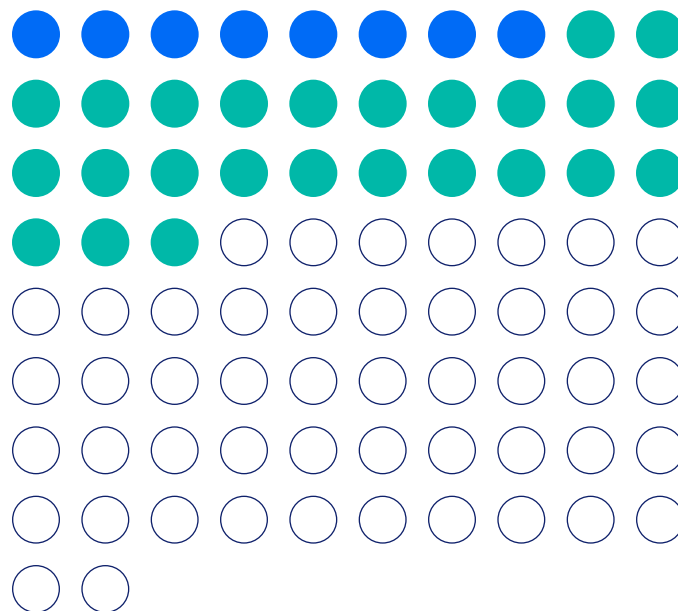
As of April 2025, 82 new members had been sworn into the 119th Congress. Of these, **33** are parents of children under the age of 18.

figure 3:

freshmen members of congress who have minor children

● **Moms of minor children** ● **Dads of minor children**

Of the **eight** moms of minor children, all have held prior elected office, and seven are Democrats.

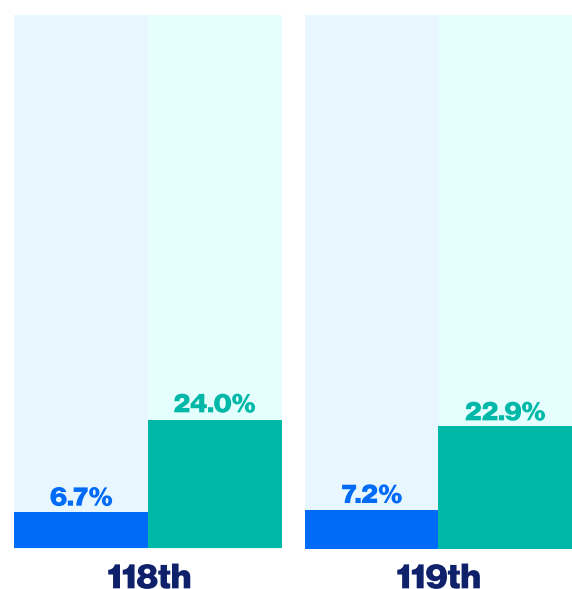


Of the **25** dads of minor children, 14 have held prior elected office, nine are Democrats, and 16 are Republicans.

figure 4:

118th congress comparison

● **Moms of minors** ● **Dads of minors**



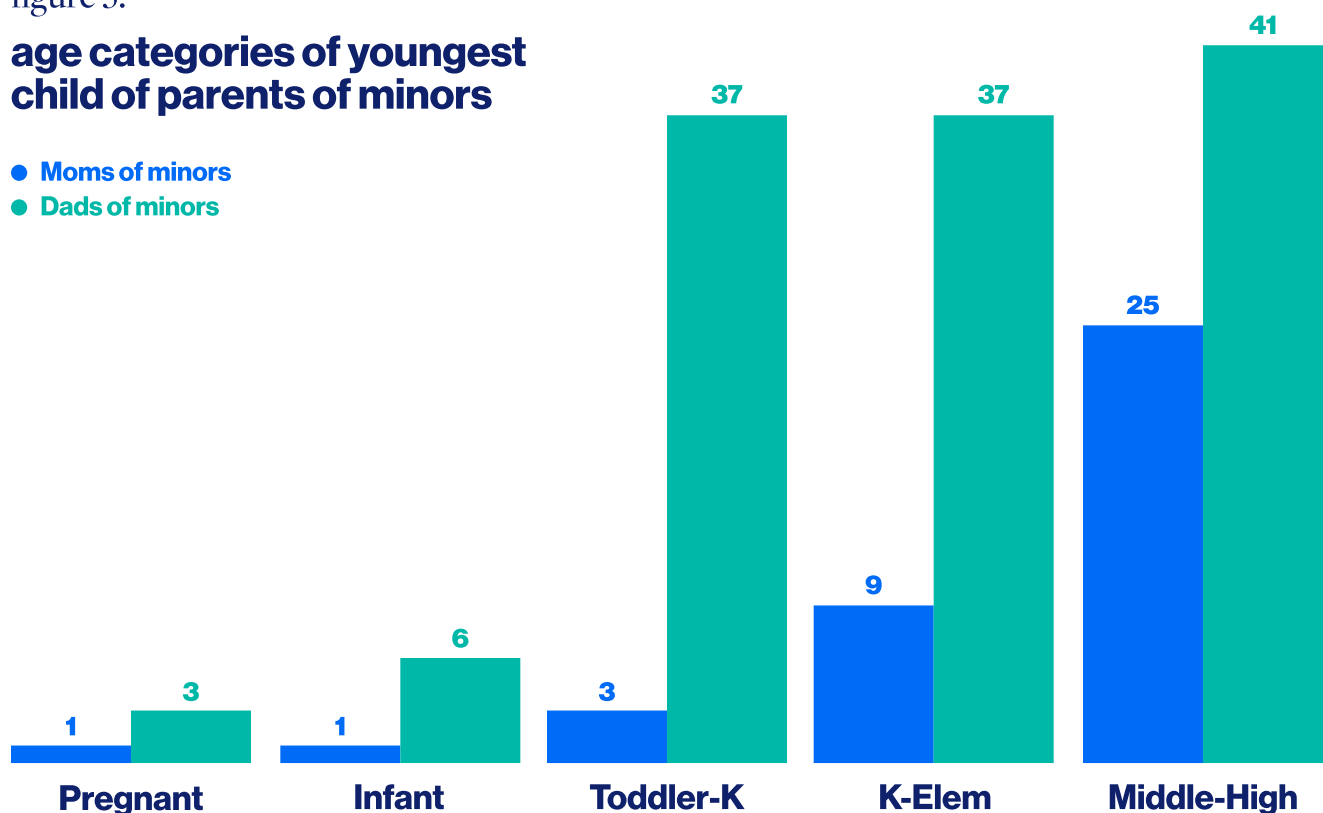
raising young children and serving in congress

Balancing family and full-time work is a challenge for all American parents—including members of Congress. Lawmakers with children face steep hurdles: the high cost of childcare, frequent travel to Washington D.C., and unpredictable voting schedules. Congressional daycare centers have long waitlists, and parents of school-aged children must choose whether their kids will attend school in D.C. or their home districts. For those looking to start or grow their families, the lack of parental leave or proxy voting means choosing between bonding with a new child and attending critical votes.

figure 5:

age categories of youngest child of parents of minors

- Moms of minors
- Dads of minors



Moms of Minors

- Pregnant 1
- Infants 1
- Toddler - Kindergarten 3
- Kindergarten - Elementary 9
- Middle - High 25

Dads of Minors

- Pregnant 3
- Infants 6
- Toddler - Kindergarten 37
- Kindergarten - Elementary 37
- Middle - High 41

In 2018, Tammy Duckworth became the first US Senator to give birth while serving in office.¹⁷ As of March 2025, only one member of Congress is serving while pregnant and three male legislators are expectant fathers.¹⁸ **There is currently only one sitting member of Congress who has given birth in the past year.**¹⁹

Dads with kids under six outnumber moms with kids under six 9:1. There are more dads with children under the age of six than there are moms of minor children of any age.

“You have a Republican male who has his wife due in May. You have another Republican that just announced yesterday that she’s pregnant. What if I get pregnant? Is it going to be a problem that we’re not here? I mean, my goodness, the oldest Congress in U.S. history, this will be better for the institution in the long term, and I think many of my colleagues agree.”

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (R), on allowing members of Congress to vote by proxy after having a child

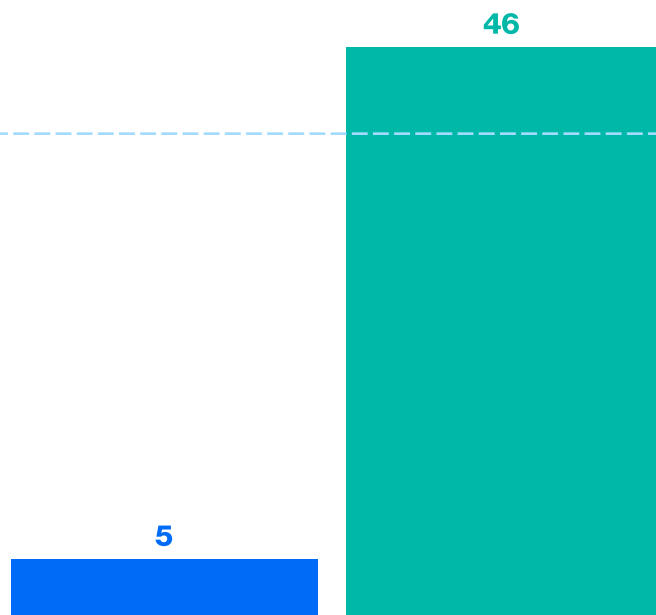
There are only **five** moms with children under the age of six in Congress.²⁰ Only **one** is a senator.²¹ There are **46** dads with children under the age of six. Only **five** are senators.

figure 6:

parents with children under 6 by gender and compared to all moms of minors in congress

- **Moms with children under six**
- **Dads with children under six**

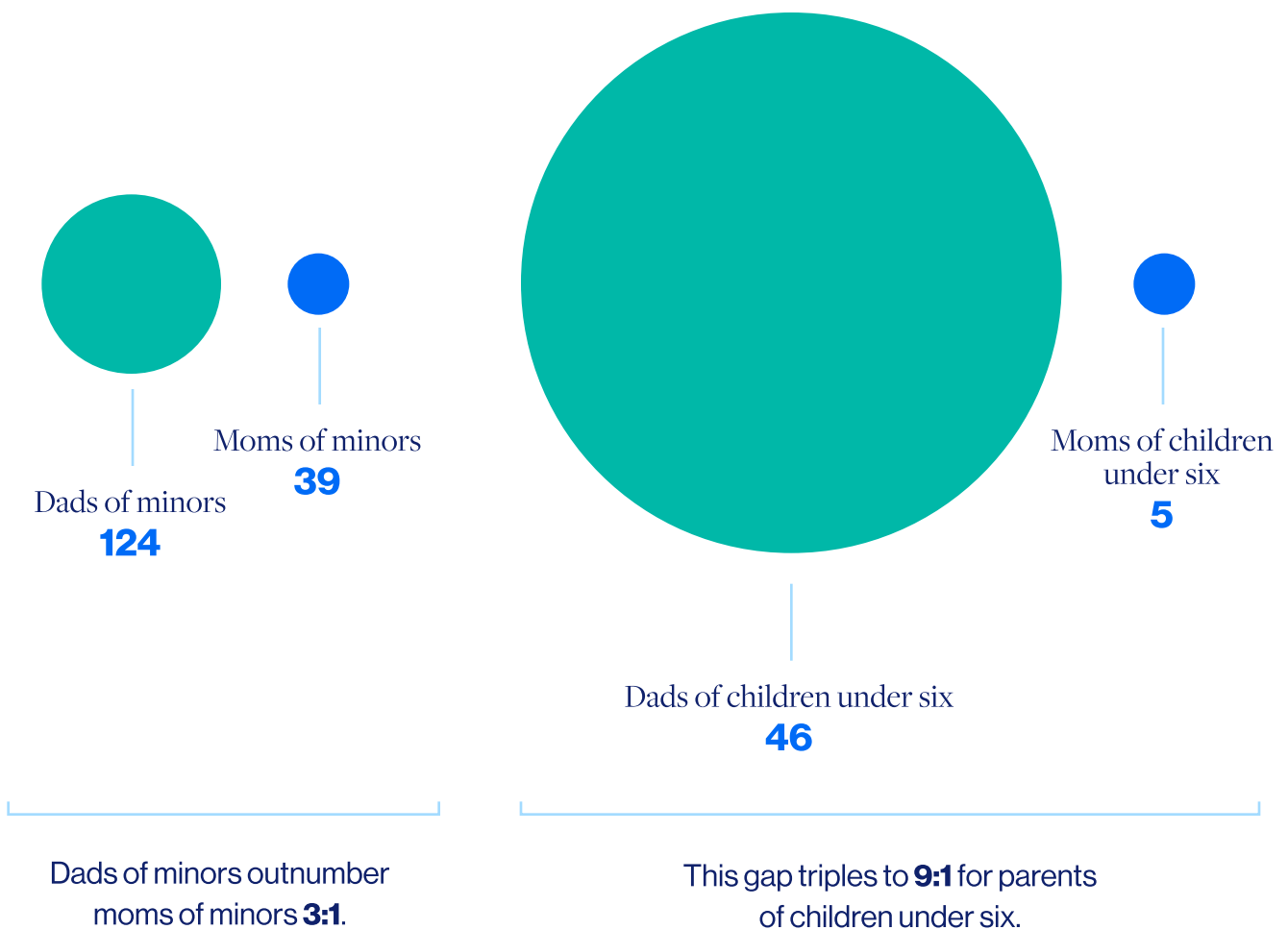
39 total
moms of
minors in
Congress



representation overview

Moms of minor children make up only **7.2%** of all Congressmembers, while dads of minor children make up **22.9%** of all Congress members.

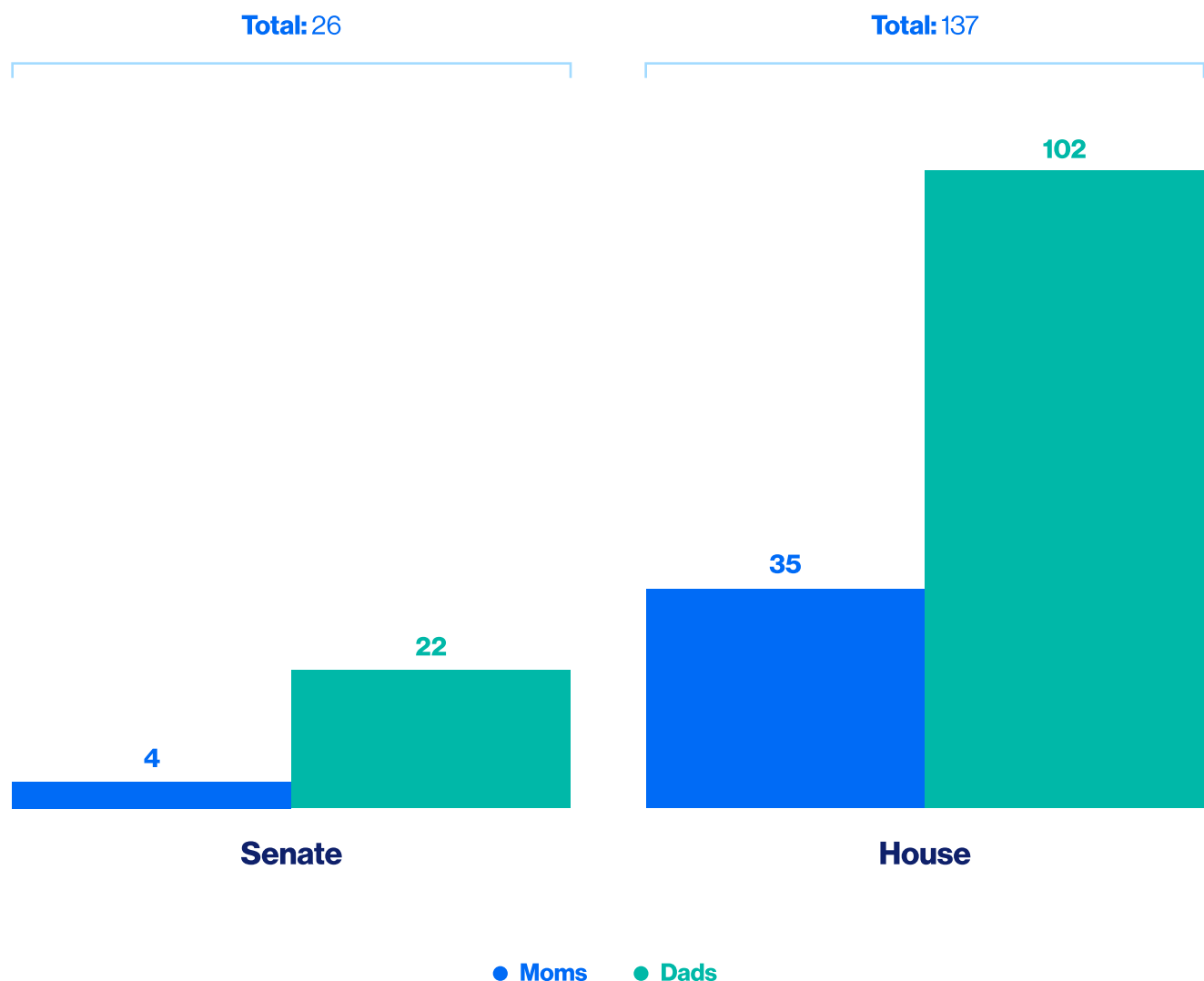
figure 7:
representation of dads vs. moms



senate vs. house

Moms of minor children make up **8.0%** of the House and just **4.0%** of the Senate—even though women comprise **28.7%** of the House and **26.0%** of the Senate.

figure 8:
parents of minor children in the house and senate



partisanship

As of April 2025, there have been at least **six bipartisan bills** introduced in the 119th Congress addressing childcare access, cost, and quality — and all are **co-sponsored by a mom** of either minor or adult children.¹²

“More and more colleagues have joined the Child Care Availability and Affordability Act. As we work to build back America, it just makes sense. I was proud to introduce this legislation with Senator Tim Kaine, and we believe it will help address our nation’s child care crisis. Supporters are both Republicans and Democrats, they’re both parents and grandparents who understand how incredibly difficult it is to find affordable, high-quality, reliable childcare.”

Katie Britt (R), sponsor of 2025 Child Care Availability and Affordability Act

figure 9:
representation of parents of minors in each party

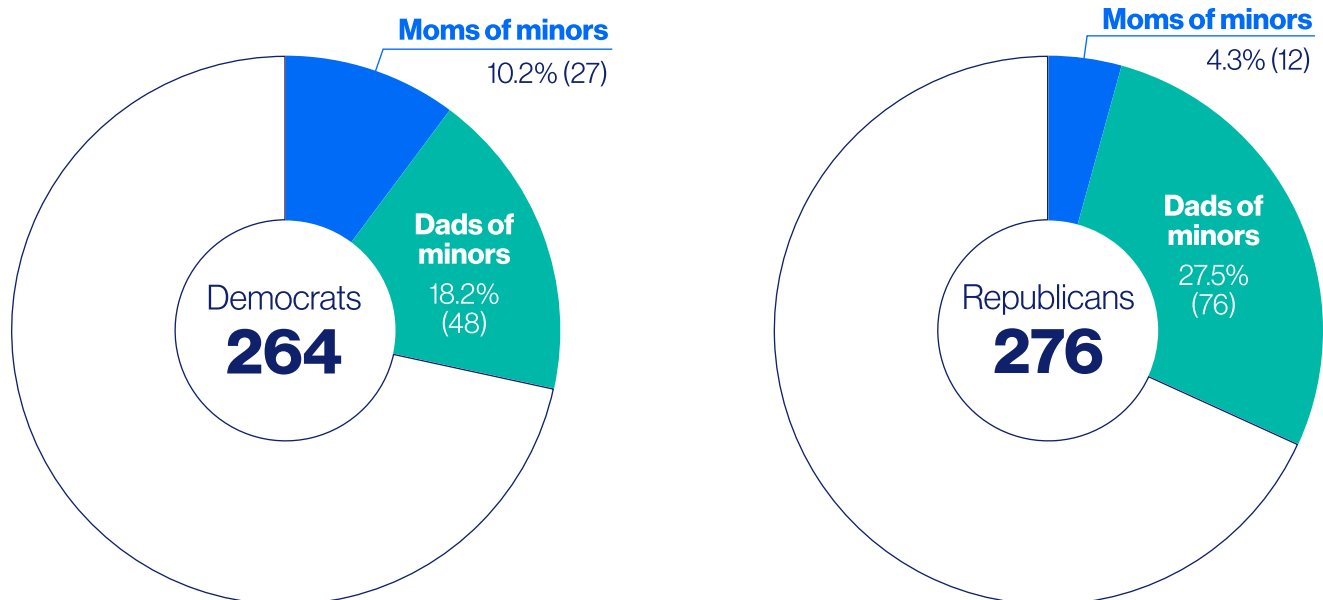
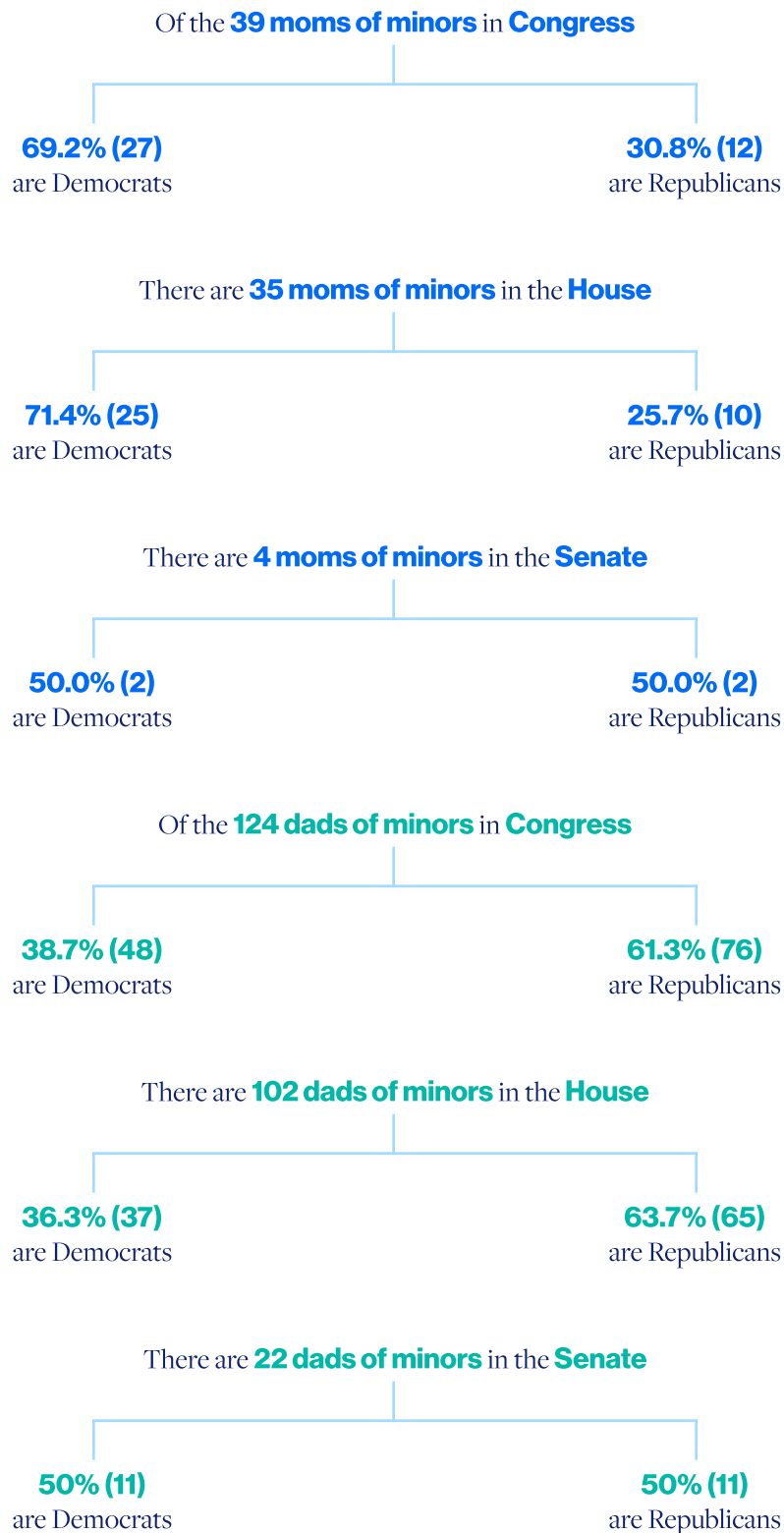


figure 10:

parents of minor children by partisanship and chamber

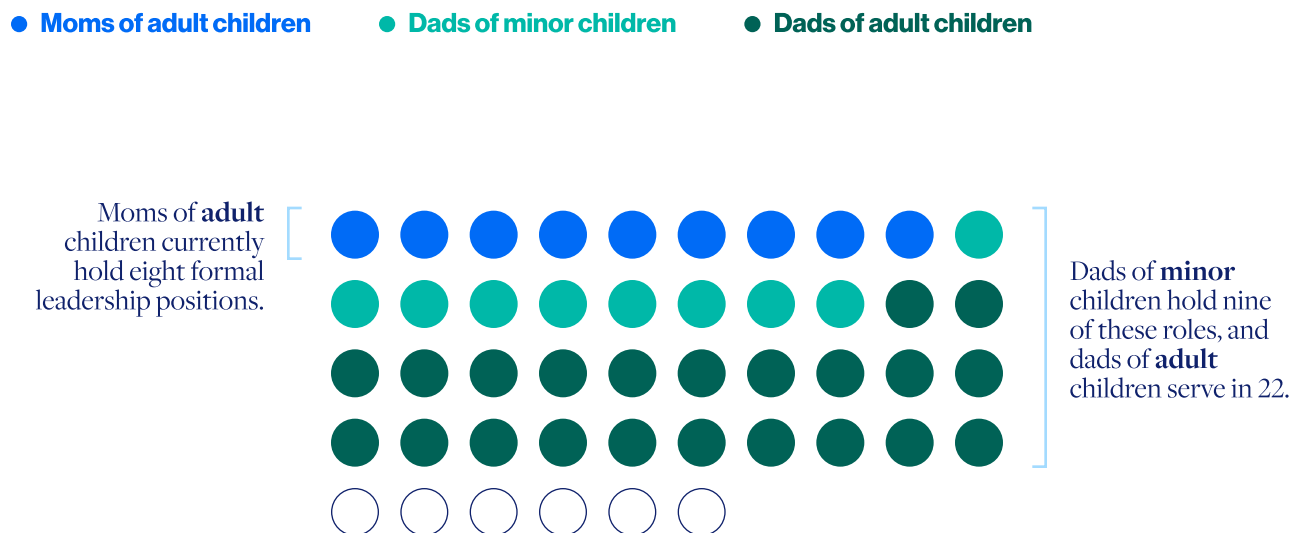


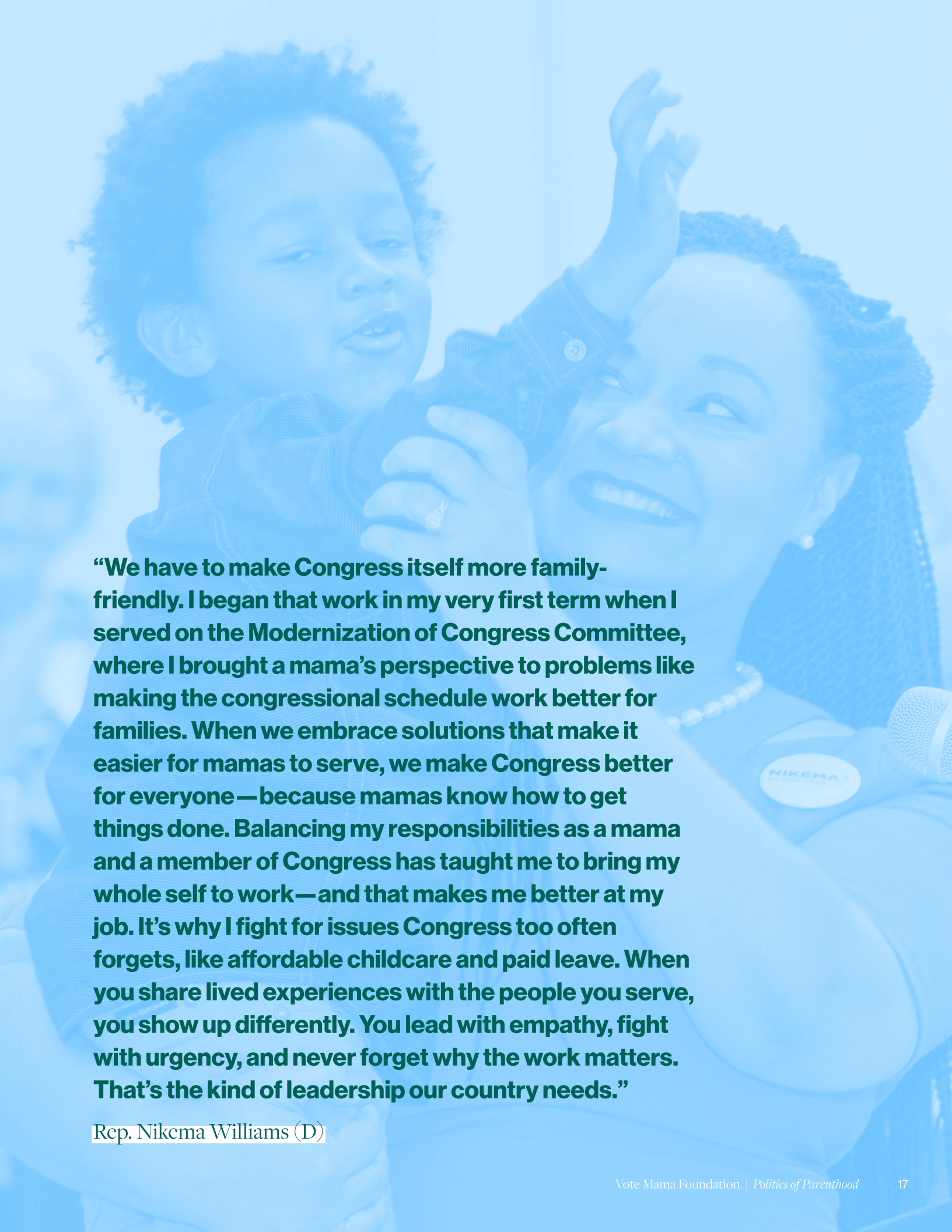
leadership

Formal leadership roles are essential for shaping the legislative agenda, coordinating party strategy, and influencing policymaking. Some of the most notable positions are Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, Minority Leader, and committee chairs. These representatives are key decision-makers and have the ability to influence other members of Congress.

Moms of minor children currently hold zero of the 46 formal leadership positions across both chambers.

figure 11:
parents holding leadership positions





“We have to make Congress itself more family-friendly. I began that work in my very first term when I served on the Modernization of Congress Committee, where I brought a mama’s perspective to problems like making the congressional schedule work better for families. When we embrace solutions that make it easier for mamas to serve, we make Congress better for everyone—because mamas know how to get things done. Balancing my responsibilities as a mama and a member of Congress has taught me to bring my whole self to work—and that makes me better at my job. It’s why I fight for issues Congress too often forgets, like affordable childcare and paid leave. When you share lived experiences with the people you serve, you show up differently. You lead with empathy, fight with urgency, and never forget why the work matters. That’s the kind of leadership our country needs.”

Rep. Nikema Williams (D)

Part 2:

Demographics

representation:

demographics

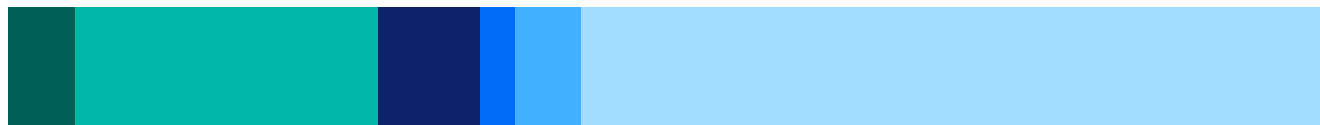
race & ethnicity

figure 12:

race and ethnicity of women as a percentage of all moms of minors

There are a total of **39** moms of minor children

43.6% are women of color



● **AAPI:** 2 (5.1%) ● **Indigenous:** 0 (0.0%) ● **MENA:** 1 (2.6%) ● **White:** 22 (56.4%)
● **Black / AA:** 9 (23.1%) ● **Latinx/Hispanic:** 3 (7.7%) ● **Multiracial:** 2 (5.1%)

figure 13:

race and ethnicity of men as a percentage of all dads of minors

There are a total of **124** dads of minor children

22.6% are men of color



● **AAPI:** 7 (5.6%) ● **Indigenous:** 0 (0.0%) ● **MENA:** 0 (0.0%) ● **White:** 96 (77.4%)
● **Black / AA:** 7 (5.6%) ● **Latinx/Hispanic:** 12 (9.7%) ● **Multiracial:** 2 (1.6%)

age

figure 14:

moms of minor children by generation

Total: 39 moms of minors



● **Gen Z:** 0 (0.0%)

● **Millennial:** 13 (33.3%)

● **Gen X:** 26 (66.7%)

● **Boomer:** 0 (0.0%)

figure 15:

dads of minor children by generation

Total: 124 dads of minors



● **Gen Z:** 0 (0.0%)

● **Millennial:** 30 (24.2%)

● **Gen X:** 85 (68.5%)

● **Boomer:** 9 (7.3%)

gender identity & sexual orientation

Our findings among LGBTQ+ members of Congress remain consistent with those from the 118th Congress: **of the 13 LGBTQ+ members, only one is a mom of minor children.** There are no openly bisexual or transgender parents, nor openly gay fathers currently serving in Congress.

moms of adult children

Nearly half of all women in Congress are mothers of adult children. Research has shown that women often wait until their children are grown before running for office—a testament to the challenges of managing both a household and a campaign.¹³ But for women in Congress with adult children, their lived experiences still have a profound impact on their political careers. Research finds that both Democratic and Republican women who have children of any age are more likely to sponsor and support legislation related to children and families than their colleagues without children.¹⁴

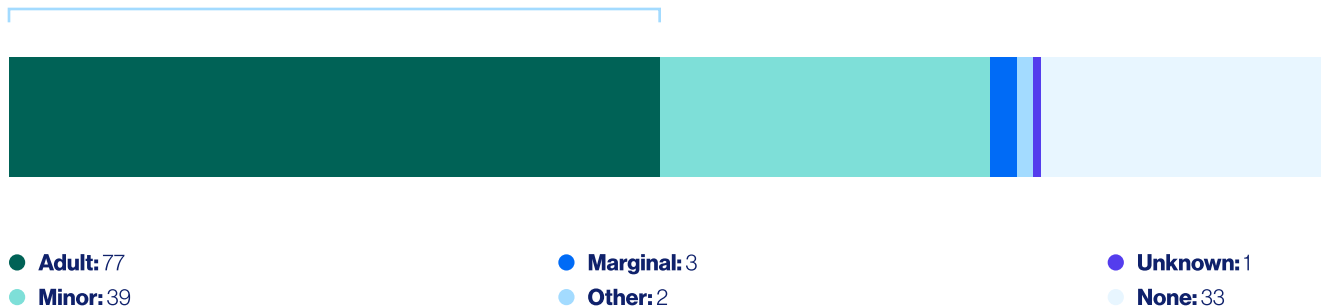
“Becoming a mother put me into the fight for other people in a deeper, more personal way. And it made me more persistent. Damn it, no parent should have that much trouble trying to support herself and her family and get care for her children.”

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D), in [Time Magazine](#), when asked if she would have become a senator if she hadn’t also become a mother.

figure 16:

parent status of all women as a percentage of all women in congress by age category of youngest child

77 out of **155** women in Congress
are moms of adult children



single parents

In the United States, one in five families with children under 18 is a single-mother household.¹⁵ **Yet, there are only nine single parents in Congress—only four of whom are single moms.** Research shows that women who are primary breadwinners are less likely to run for office, underscoring how economic barriers shape political participation.¹⁶ Given the high costs of childcare and campaigning, the underrepresentation of single parents in Congress is unsurprising—but it's a clear signal that structural reforms are needed to make elected office more accessible.

“Being a mother impacts every single aspect of my life and my work as a Member of Congress - it's incredibly challenging but incredibly enriching. When I review legislation I always think about how the policy will impact mothers, caregivers, parents, and especially single parents. My experience as a mom in Congress also continues to show me how far we have to go in terms of mothers serving in Congress and supporting mothers or parents nationwide. We need substantive child care, good pay and benefits for care workers, affordable and quality health care, and so much more. I'm committed to making sure it's better, not worse, for future generations of parents in Congress and families across the nation.”

Rep. Lateefah Simon (D)

Part 3:

State by State Overview of Parents in Congress

state overview

only 21 states and the us virgin islands have a mom of minor children serving in congress

In contrast, **41 states** have at least one dad of minor children in office.

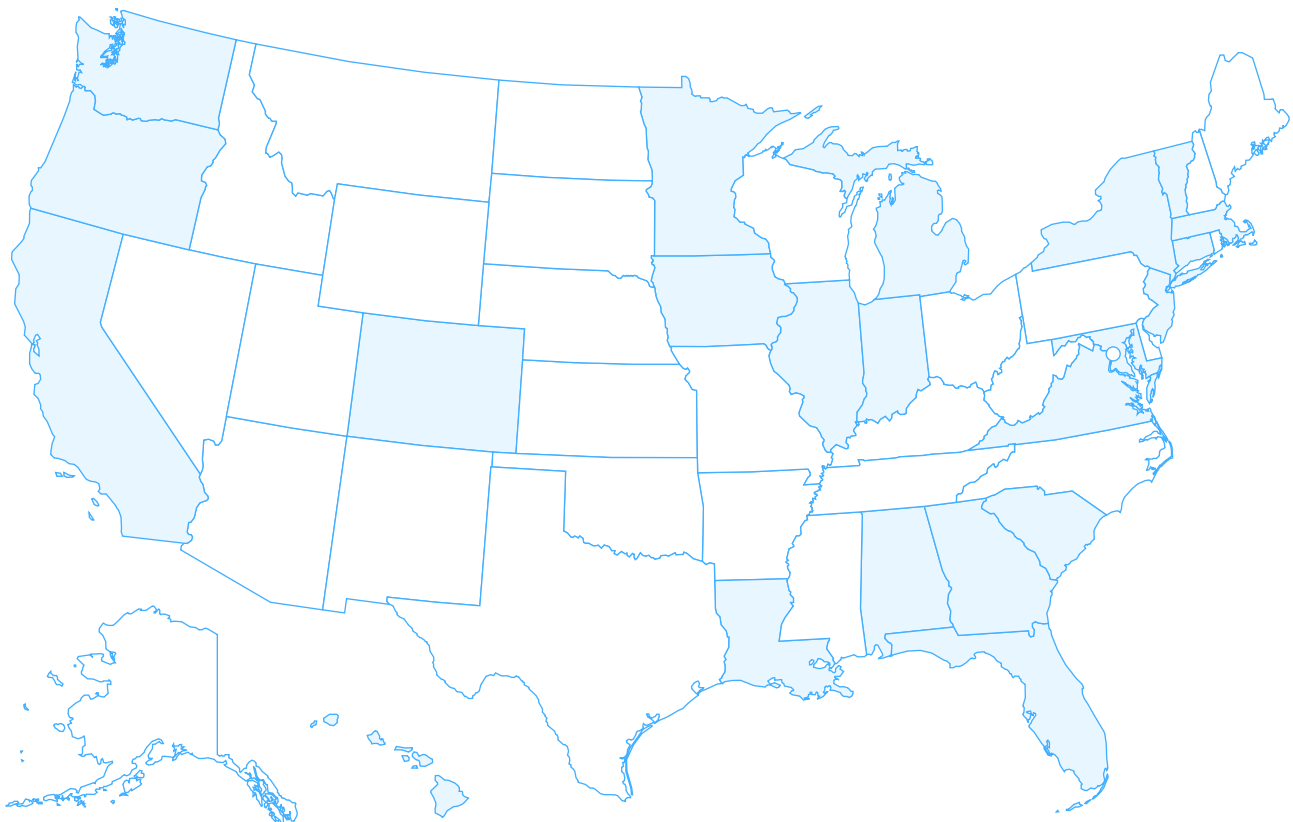
29 states have no moms of minors serving in either chamber of Congress

Eight states and five non-voting territories do not have the perspective of a parent raising young children in Congress at all.

figure 17:

representation of moms of minors in all states

- States with at least one mom
- States with no moms



parents of minors in congress by state

● No moms of minors ● No parents of minors

State/ Territory/ District	Total House Seats	Total Senate Seats	Moms of Minors in the House	Moms of Minors in the Senate	Total Moms of Minors in Congress	Dads of Minors in House	Dads of Minors in Senate	Total Dads of Minors in Congress
● AK	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
AL	7	2	0	1	1	1	0	1
● AR	4	2	0	0	0	1	1	2
● AZ	9	2	0	0	0	4	1	5
CA	52	2	4	0	4	14	1	15
CO	8	2	2	0	2	4	2	6
CT	5	2	1	0	1	0	1	1
● DE	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
FL	28	2	3	1	4	7	0	7
GA	14	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
HI	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	1
IA	4	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
● ID	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
IA	4	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
ID	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
IL	17	2	0	1	1	1	0	1
IN	9	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
● KS	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
● KY	6	2	0	0	0	3	0	3
LA	6	2	1	0	1	2	0	2
MA	9	2	2	0	2	2	0	2
● MD	8	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
● ME	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
MI	13	2	3	0	3	2	0	2
MN	8	2	1	0	1	2	0	2
● MO	8	2	0	0	0	1	2	3
● MS	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
● MT	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
● NC	14	2	0	0	0	5	0	5
● ND	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
● NE	3	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
● NH	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
NJ	12	2	2	0	2	2	1	3
● NM	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
● NV	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
NY	26	2	3	1	4	7	0	7
● OH	15	2	0	0	0	3	1	4
● OK	5	2	0	0	0	1	1	2
OR	6	2	2	0	2	0	1	1
● PA	17	2	0	0	0	4	1	5
● RI	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
SC	7	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
● SD	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
● TN	9	2	0	0	0	3	1	4
● TX	38	2	0	0	0	15	1	16
● UT	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
VA	11	2	2	0	2	3	0	3
VT	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
WA	10	2	2	0	2	1	0	1
● WI	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
● WV	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
● WY	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

conclusion

Vote Mama Foundation believes Congress should represent the voices of all people—including parents and those wanting to start a family.

Serving in Congress is a full-time job, and no one should have to choose between serving their constituents and raising a family. With only 14 women to have ever given birth while serving,²² it is clear that there is still a long way to go to ensure that all parents of young children can run for office, serve their constituents, and raise their families. Congress has long been inaccessible to women—especially mothers with young children. Naming and addressing the underrepresentation of moms is a critical first step in closing the gap between caregivers and political power.



recommendations

The need for childcare, networks of parental support, and family-friendly policies doesn't stop after being elected. **The following recommendations would make Congress more accessible to parents and caregivers running for and serving in office:**

1. Create a reasonable voting schedule that does not require members to leave their families at unpredictable times.
2. Normalize parents making the decision to live in their district or in the capital based on what is best for their families.
3. Allow members to vote by proxy or virtually so they can perform their duties remotely when they or their families have increased care needs.
4. Normalize members of Congress using campaign funds to pay for child or dependent care, and allow them to use campaign funds to pay for security expenses.
5. Normalize federal candidates using campaign funds to pay themselves a living wage and cover dependent care.
6. Create an official family leave policy to allow members to care for their families without stigma.
7. Install changing tables in all members' bathrooms, regardless of gender, and ensure accessibility of pumping rooms in all legislative buildings.
8. Expand House and Senate childcare centers to reduce waitlists and better meet the needs of legislators and staff.

endnotes

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⁷ The Commonwealth Fund, "Insights into the U.S. Maternal Mortality Crisis: An International Comparison." (2024). The Common Wealth Fund. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/jun/insights-us-maternal-mortality-crisis-international-comparison>

⁸ Childcare Aware of America. "Child Care in America: 2024 Price & Supply" (2025). Childcare Aware of America. <https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape24/>

⁹ Center for American Progress. "America's Child Care Deserts in 2018" (2018). Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>

¹⁰ Our totals include non-voting members for a total of 541 members of Congress.

¹¹ These totals were calculated using the US Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey Microdata.

¹² First Five Years Fund. (2025). "118th and 119th Congress: Bipartisan Child Care Legislation in the House and Senate" First Five Years Fund. <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2025/04/118th-congress-bipartisan-child-care-legislation-addressing-supply-cost-accessibility-and-quality/>

¹³ Carrol and Sanbonmatsu (2013).

¹⁴ Bryant and Hellwege (2019).

¹⁵ Salas-Betsch, Isabella. (2024). "The Economic Status of Single Mothers." Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-economic-status-of-single-mothers/>.

¹⁶ Bernhard, et al. (2020).

¹⁷ Hamedy, Saba, and Daniella Diaz. "Sen. Duckworth Makes History, Casts Vote with Baby on Senate Floor." CNN Politics, April 20, 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/2023011041645/https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/19/politics/tammy-duckworth-baby-senate-floor/index.html>.

¹⁸ This reflects the time of data collection and does not reflect any birth announcements after March 2025.

¹⁹ This number rises to two members who gave birth in the past year if including Rep Gonzalez Colon, who left office in January 2025 to assume office as the Governor of Puerto Rico.

²⁰ Includes one pregnant legislator.

²¹ Senator Tammy Duckworth gave birth in April 2018 to her youngest daughter. She will be seven years old at the time of report publication.

²² Kane, Paul. "Resolution to help new parents in Congress at odds with GOP leaders." The Washington Post, March 29, 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/29/congress-proxy-voting-gop/>



Politics of Parenthood