



# Bright Horizons®

January 13, 2026

Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education  
Committee on Education and Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2176 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6100

Chair Kevin Kiley, Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici, and Distinguished Members,

I am honored to be invited to testify at this hearing on *Who's Watching the Kids? How Employers, Innovators, and Parents Are Solving America's Child Care Crunch.*

I'm Mary Lou Burke Afonso, overseeing North American center operations for Bright Horizons. Thank you for the opportunity to address a critical issue at the intersection of family well-being and economic strength: childcare access for employers.

Bright Horizons was founded in 1986, partnering with companies to provide onsite childcare solutions for their employees just as dual-earner households increasingly became the norm. Our employer-backed solutions include on- and near-site centers and back-up care solutions to cover gaps in regular care arrangements. Over the past 40 years, we've worked side-by-side with employer partners to deliver on our founding mission, demonstrating the community and business value of supporting working parents and at the same time, investing in our caregiving workforce with education, career development, and industry-leading pay and benefits that professionalized the field of early education.

For millions of families, childcare is essential for parents to work. Yet across the country—in urban and rural communities, for nurses, first responders, line workers, office workers, alike—quality care remains out of reach.

In our most recent annual study, [The Modern Family Index](#),

- 80% of working parents said the American workforce still hasn't adjusted to reflect the care needs of modern families.
- And 67% of working parents feel forced to choose between focusing on their career or taking care of their family.

Employers can help close the gap. Today, Bright Horizons has partnered with nearly 1,450 organizations, including over 220 Fortune 500 companies spanning industries as diverse as agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, and tech. We operate programs for employers in every state represented by this subcommittee and directly in several of your districts.

Across these diverse partnerships, the results are consistent: when employers invest in care solutions, absenteeism decreases, productivity rises, and talent retention improves.

At Bright Horizons, we believe supporting working parents is not just the right thing to do—it is an economic and social imperative. And private partnerships play a vital role in making childcare more affordable and accessible for American families. That's why today's conversation is so important.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Lou Burke Afonso

Chief Operating Officer, North America, Bright Horizons