

Should All Americans Pay for Universal Preschool?

In his State of the Union speech, President Obama called for taxpayer-funded universal preschool for “every child in America.” As a mom of a toddler, I reject that plan.

Babies and toddlers have what experts call an “absorbent mind,” in which they learn primarily by absorbing their environment and the movement and speech of those around them. It is no surprise that they are very attached to home and family in these years. They are not “social” beings yet; their only relationship need is to feel cared for by, and be in close proximity to, the people who love them the most.

The idea of taking these tender souls out of their homes and putting them in some government school makes me shudder.

Dreadful Report

Obama promises that these early-start schools would have a positive impact on children’s later education. But that promise appears empty, given the dreadful report just out on Head Start.

Head Start, the federal program for pre-kindergarten children from low-income families, costs taxpayers \$8 billion each year. Congress asked the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a study of the program’s effectiveness, the results of which were available last October (but not released until after the election).

The study tracked the progress of 5,000 children, half of whom had been through the Head Start program from as early as age 3 and half of whom had not. The results are bad news.

Despite the vast sums of money spent to ready these children

for school, the study found that Head Start had little to no positive impact on the cognitive abilities or emotional well-being of its participants, and it even showed a negative impact in certain areas.

After nearly 50 years running, the flagship federal preschool program Head Start does not give children any measurable head start at all.

Stronger Families

Something that does help children prepare for school and beyond is stronger families, a subject the president also mentioned in his State of the Union address.

According to respected sociologist Dr. Pat Fagan, more than a million American children suffer the divorce of their parents each year.

We cannot have secure, well-prepared, confident children if we continue to sustain a culture of no-fault divorce, cohabitation and “hookups” that produce kids but no families.

And as far as the use of federal dollars goes, I’ve got a better idea for Obama. Rather than taking our money and setting up government schools for babies, why not give that money back to moms and dads and let them decide what’s best for their families?

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