

Trump Administration Weighs \$5,000 Baby Bonus to Reverse Declining Birth Rates

President Trump signaled support for a proposed \$5,000 baby bonus, part of a broader plan to increase fertility rates. The proposal, backed by JD Vance and Elon Musk, is one of several pronatalist policies under discussion at the White House.

Federal / **Published On April 23, 2025 06:11 AM /**

Staff Consortium **April 23, 2025**

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President Donald Trump's administration is actively considering a range of policies to encourage Americans to have more children, including a proposed \$5,000 cash "baby bonus" for new mothers after childbirth. The initiative, part of a broader effort to reverse the nation's declining birth rates, has sparked discussions with policy experts and conservative advocates, reflecting the priorities of key administration figures like Vice President JD Vance and tech entrepreneur Elon Musk.

The U.S. fertility rate has been on a downward trend, dropping to a record low of 1.6 children per woman in 2023, compared to 3.65 in 1960, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While 2024 saw a slight uptick in births, experts caution that the long-term decline persists. The administration's focus on boosting birth rates aligns with a conservative cultural agenda emphasizing traditional family values, as outlined in Project 2025, a policy blueprint from the Heritage Foundation that calls for restoring the family as the cornerstone of American life.

"I just think this administration is inherently pronatalist," said Simone Collins, a prominent advocate for increasing birth rates. Alongside her husband, Malcolm Collins, she has submitted draft executive orders to the White House, including a proposal for a "National Medal of Motherhood" to honor mothers with six or more children. Collins pointed to the family-oriented imagery of administration officials, noting, "Look at the number of kids that major leaders in the administration have. You didn't hear about kids in the same way under Biden."

Among the ideas under consideration is a plan to reserve 30% of Fulbright scholarships, a prestigious government-funded international fellowship, for applicants who are married or have children. Another proposal, suggested by Lyman Stone of the Institute for Family Studies' Pronatalism Initiative, emphasizes prioritizing family status in federal programs. "What the government is doing with these programs is conferring status," Stone told The New York Times. "That being the case, it's bad for the government to blindly confer status on people for their singleness."

The administration is also exploring government-funded programs to educate women about their menstrual cycles and ovulation patterns to enhance fertility awareness, a concept supported by conservative Christian groups advocating "natural fertility" methods over hormonal contraception. Additionally, the White House is preparing a report due in May 2025 to recommend ways to make in vitro fertilization (IVF) more accessible and affordable, building on Trump's campaign pledge to support IVF. In February 2025, Trump signed an executive order aimed at expanding IVF access, and during the 2024 campaign, he referred to himself as the "father of IVF" and the "fertilization president."

On Tuesday, April 22, Trump endorsed the baby bonus concept when questioned by reporters. "Sounds like a good idea to me!" he said, signaling openness to the \$5,000 cash incentive for new mothers. The proposal, which could take the form of a child tax credit and would require congressional approval, has been modeled after similar programs in countries like South Korea. However, critics note that the bonus, if limited to married parents as some advocates suggest, could exclude single mothers, who are disproportionately Black and Hispanic, raising concerns about equity.

The push for pronatalist policies has gained traction among administration allies. Vice President JD Vance, a father of three, has long championed higher birth rates, stating in 2021, "We owe something to our country. We owe something to the future. The best way to invest in it is to ensure the next generation actually exists." Vance has also proposed increasing the child tax credit to \$5,000, building on Trump's first-term achievement of doubling the credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000. That credit, set to expire at the end of 2025, could revert to \$1,000 if Congress and Trump do not act.

Elon Musk, a father of 14, has warned that declining birth rates could threaten civilization's survival, a view echoed by policy analyst Emma Waters of the Heritage Foundation. "We need to channel the MAHA spirit and really dive deep into infertility," Waters said, referencing Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Make America Healthy Again campaign. Waters emphasized that the goal is not

only more babies but also more families formed.

Other proposals include increased research funding for environmental and health-related causes of infertility, though some conservative groups express skepticism about IVF. In February, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, a father of nine, issued a memo directing the Department of Transportation to prioritize communities with above-average marriage and birth rates, a move seen as aligning with the administration's pronatalist stance.

Public health advocates have raised concerns about the broader context of these policies. The U.S. faces a maternal mortality crisis, with over 80% of maternal deaths deemed preventable, according to the Commonwealth Fund. Black women are particularly at risk. Recent cuts to federal health programs, including the CDC's Division of Reproductive Health, which focused on maternal health, have drawn criticism from groups like the March of Dimes. "As an OB-GYN and public health leader, I can't overstate the value these resources and programs – and our partners across CDC, HRSA, and NIH – have brought to families and frontline providers," said Dr. Amanda Williams, interim chief medical officer at the March of Dimes.

Critics like Peggy Heffington, a history professor at the University of Chicago, argue that the proposals focus on ideological goals rather than addressing economic barriers to parenthood. "This has long been the pattern in the U.S.—ardent pronatalist rhetoric but an unwillingness to address factors in the American family, economy, and society that made it increasingly appealing for women to limit their fertility, or to opt out of motherhood entirely," Heffington told Newsweek. The U.S. remains one of only six countries without federally mandated paid leave, and one in four women return to work within two weeks of giving birth.

The proposed \$5,000 bonus has drawn mixed reactions. While some see it as a step toward supporting families, others argue it is insufficient to cover the costs of childbirth and child-rearing, with hospital bills for uninsured mothers often exceeding the bonus amount. In contrast, countries like Hungary, which saw a temporary fertility increase from 1.4 to 1.6 between 2015 and 2021, have implemented more extensive pronatalist policies, though their long-term success remains limited.

White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt defended the administration's family-focused agenda, stating, "The President wants America to be a country where all children can safely grow up and achieve the American dream. As a mother myself, I am proud to work for a president who is taking significant action to leave a better country for the next generation." Leavitt also highlighted Trump's broader policies, including border security and tax reductions, as supportive of American families.

The administration has not yet committed to any specific proposal, and the feasibility of implementing the baby bonus or other incentives remains uncertain. The discussions signal a shift toward prioritizing family growth, but challenges like maternal health disparities, economic pressures, and policy inclusivity will likely shape the debate as the White House moves forward.