

House Bill: Child Care Issues

If we as a state and as the people in the communities of this state, believe that it is a priority that all of us should be as self sufficient and self supporting as our individual circumstances allow, then we will need to address the issue of who will care for our children and how we will pay for it.

*Back & forth*

Currently a daycare provider who is state paid will make a little under \$2.00 an hour per child. To reach a living wage amount, that provider will have to care for six or seven children. A family paying for two children in daycare at that rate, would pay \$680.00 per month for daycare. This could be a family with two working parents or it could be a family with only one working parent; it could be a family making a living wage or a family making minimum wage, and again it is possible that there would be only one adult supporting this family with two children that need to be cared for.

A single working parent making minimum wage would gross \$824.00 a month and if they paid \$680.00 a month (which is the state pay rate and probably the lowest rate) for two children in daycare, they would be left with \$144.00 a month to live on AND the daycare provider would be making only \$4.00 per hour for caring for those two children.

Thankfully, this parent would be eligible for child care assistance. The family will still live on a net income of less than that \$824.00 per month.

In the case of two parents working for a little above minimum wage or one parent working for over 7.00 per hour; the income that they would live on would be only a little more than the parent making minimum wage and eligible for child care assistance, because these parents would be paying the going rate for child care for two children, and WOULD NOT be eligible for child care assistance. Some single parents fear taking a higher paying job because the daycare cost in the end leaves them with less income.

*eg instead*

In the case of two working parents, often one parent will decide to quit his or her low paying job, having few prospects for a higher paying job, and this will be a good decision and a responsible decision for them to make, because they can then care for their children themselves. The working parent will support the family with a low paying job and they have no daycare costs. They will live at about the same poverty level income of \$10-14,000 a year as the previous families.

However, if this non-working parent that is caring for the children goes back to school, the family can be eligible for child care assistance for a short time and going to school will increase the chance that this parent will obtain a higher paying job with the additional education. This is a good service to the people in our state and in our communities and this service should be funded and increased.

It should be funded to include working grandparents with deceased, incarcerated or addicted children. Grandparents are currently shouldering a heavy burden of daycare costs. Grandparents have limited options of what family members can help with the care of the children, because it certainly won't be the grandparents! Issues of custody and income often prohibit grandparents raising grandchildren from receiving any kind of child care assistance. This is one example of how we as a community can look ahead and expand the child care assistance programs to benefit all of our working caregivers of children.

This service that we provide to the people of our state in the form of child care assistance is a thoughtful plan for the future of our state. When we have more of the people in our state working at better paying jobs and educating themselves, then we have a vital, growing workforce filled with parents who are supporting their families. When we have the service of child care assistance then we have families with children in licensed, registered daycare. A licensed daycare, as a small business entity, is in turn caring for our children responsibly and supporting their own families in the process.

When we as a state DO NOT fund or UNDERFUND child care assistance, then we have cases of children being cared for by any person who is willing and is not working themselves. These are sometimes unsafe people to be

with our children. We also will have parents who will not work because the cost of child care makes it harder to support their families than the option of being on public assistance--which is a limited option. When that limited option of public assistance runs out for a parent who is unemployable, then we have homeless families and catastrophic health care costs for those families. As a community, we choose to care for homeless families, and we pay a higher dollar price when we ignore the reasons that families fall to the bottom of society. We can either pay that higher price grudgingly when the disaster of homelessness happens, like we currently do, or we can plan ahead in a preventative manner.

The KEY to the Welfare to Work programs IS funded childcare, but the benefits of child care assistance go far beyond those programs. Child care assistance is one way to help re-vitalize our economy, create and support small business, keep our children safe, and allow for the strengthening of fragile families.

Again, if our priorities are to have self supporting, self sufficient families, then we need to address the fragile members of those families who cannot yet work, but can create and grow new businesses and new jobs based on their absolute need to be cared for; and those members of our families are our children.

Thank you