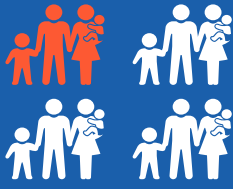


Child Care is Essential for Working Idaho Families



1 in 4 families with young children are struggling to cover basic needs.

Working families need access to high-quality affordable child care as a safe and secure option for their young children when they are at work. These families are key to Idaho’s strong economy and their health is vital to the health of our communities across the state.

But the high cost of care - compounded by rising costs of living - is forcing working families to make the difficult decision about whether or not to exit the workforce. A recent study by EC-Rapid and Stanford University found 1 in 4 families with young children are struggling to pay for utilities, food, or housing.¹ Idaho has seen an estimated 14% of working parents prevented from working due to gaps in child care; the highest rate in the country.²

On average, child care costs over \$8,000 annually in Idaho and for families with infants it is even higher. In fact, infant care in Idaho is estimated to cost more than in-state college tuition, on average.³ Often families with young children are just getting started in their chosen careers or

lifetime earning trajectory. Financially managing an essential fixed cost such as child care, which is as expensive as college tuition, creates an undue burden on working families when they can least afford the expense.

In Idaho, infant care is unaffordable for nearly 80% of families, based on USHHS recommendations.⁴

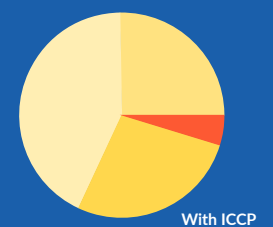
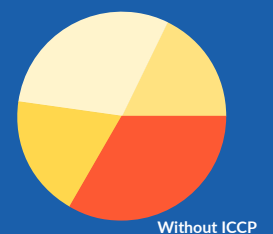
SUPPORTING WORKING IDAHO FAMILIES

Idaho’s Child Care Program (ICCP) provides critical assistance to eligible families with young children who require child care services, covering a portion of the cost associated with care for their children. Funded through the Child Care Block Grant, families are required to meet an income eligibility, be in school or working, and have a child under the age of 13. Nearly 7,000 children receive high-quality child care each month thanks to this program.⁵ However, thousands of families in Idaho still face financial hurdles when covering their basic expenses and yet are still outside the current income eligibility. This puts a great deal of strain on family budgets and makes raising children more difficult. These households are categorized as “asset limited, income constrained, employed”; organizations often use the acronym “ALICE” as a shorthand. They are above the federal poverty limit but still make too little to cover the rising cost of living and are often forced to accept things like substandard child care services or make impossible choices about how they will feed their families each night in exchange for keeping their car filled up with gas to make it to work the next day.⁶

The ICCP Difference

ALICE families will spend nearly 1/3 of their household income on child care for two young children in Idaho. If they were eligible for ICCP, child care would account for less than a tenth.

■ Child Care ■ Housing
■ Food ■ Health Care



IDAHO FAMILIES NEED RELIEF TO REMAIN IN THE WORKFORCE

An effective tool to lift up working families is adjusting the current income threshold for ICCP eligibility from 145 percent of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL) to 200 percent. Fourteen states have implemented similar rules to be at or above 200 percent, including Alaska, Tennessee, and Mississippi to keep up with the rise in inflation.⁷ For Idaho, this would increase access to high quality affordable child care for over 10,000 families who are spending roughly a third of their household income on child care alone. Idaho should increase the current income threshold for ICCP from 145 percent to 200 percent to alleviate some of the financial burden facing families today and reinforce Idaho’s commitment to prioritizing working families.

¹ "Not Letting Up: More Families Experience Material Hardship as Cost of Living Rises" (2022) - EC Rapid

⁴ Child Care Cost in the United States, Idaho - Economic Policy Institute

⁷ "On the Precipice: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2020* (2021) - National Women's Law Center

² "Working Parents Face Continued Chaos Despite Reopened Schools" (2022) - The Pew Charitable Trust

⁵ Idaho Child Care Program, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

³ "Cost of Child Care in Idaho," (2019) - Child Care Aware

⁶ "Idaho," (2018) - United for ALICE