

How the high cost of child care is affecting Iowa voters ^[1]

Iowans combat rising child care costs

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EXCERPTS

In Iowa, where the caucuses are just a few days away, the average cost for child care is about \$10,000 per year – but single parents with multiple children may see up to 70% of their income go toward care. CBS News' Nikole Killian spoke to mothers about how they deal with the staggering costs.

The issue is widespread enough to have galvanized Democratic presidential primary candidates hoping to appeal to Iowa voters.

A recent study showed that 76% of children under 6 in Iowa have all available parents working outside the home. For single mother Zoe Miranda, who is returning to her custodial job after maternity leave, that means figuring out a way to budget adequate child care costs with the rest of her bills.

"Sometimes I feel like I have to rob Peter to pay Paul. It is really, really hard when it comes to paying rent, paying utilities, paying my cellphone, paying my car," she said.

In 2020, estimates show a family of three would have to make less than \$31,500 annually to qualify for state child care assistance. For some, being just above the threshold is still a problem.

"I had gotten a dollar raise at work," said Stephanie Jewell, who is also a single mom. "But with that dollar raise I ended up not qualifying for child care assistance at all, and the bill went up to \$1,500 a month, and that was more than my mortgage payment." Jewell now receives assistance but fears losing it again.

Jewell's struggle is not uncommon. United Ways of Iowa Executive Director Deann Cook revealed that Iowa has one of the lowest entry points for qualifying for child care assistance, so people who do not have enough to make ends meet are still left struggling.

One Iowa manufacturing plant's innovative solution entailed organizing an onsite child care facility that offers workers a reduced rate. Kate Guess, who manages the company's HR department, hopes her plant's approach is the wave of the future in Iowa.

"I think that there's a lot of creative ways to address the child care gaps that we have here in the state and we have across the country," she said.

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