

When affording child care means turning down a raise ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

If Kim Suskevich made just a little less money, she could qualify for help with her child-care expenses. Her weekly income is \$15 too high to receive a subsidy, she said.

The Liverpool widow is raising her 7-year-old, Kaya, without any help. She's a warehouse worker at Syracuse University. Her second-grader is in daycare before school and for 15 minutes after school. She has no family to help and hasn't since her husband died four years ago.

Suskevich's child-care costs are \$127 a week. Her take-home pay is about \$300.

"I just think there should be more help for people like myself," Suskevich said.

A group of Onondaga County labor and child-care advocates is asking the state for money to do just that: help working class families better afford child care.

Child Care Solutions, SEIU Local 200United, 1199SEIU, CenterState CEO and the Workforce Development Institute have asked the Legislature to include \$3.5 million in the state budget for working class child care subsidies in Onondaga County.

People who make less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$48,500 for a family of four, can receive child care help through social services. But there's little help available for people who make more.

"A nickel an hour raise and someone can't afford to work," said Lori Boles, executive director of Child Care Solutions, a nonprofit that helps child care providers and families who need care.

The \$3.5 million would provide subsidies for more than 600 families in the county. Eligible families -- making between 200 and 275 percent of the federal poverty level -- would have to pay only 35 percent of their child care bills. The subsidy would cover the rest.

The new, working class subsidies would mirror a program that's already up and running in the Capital Region, the advocates said.

Trisha Botty, of SEIU Local 200United, said the group has been talking to state legislators including Sen. John DeFrancisco, R-Syracuse, and Sen. Dave Valesky, D-Oneida. She said it's unclear if the money will be included in this year's budget.

Suskevich has her fingers crossed. "Help up would be nice," she said.

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