

An Act Supporting Working Parents who Choose to Run for Public Office (S386/H2898)

(Sponsors: Sen. Jehlan and Reps. Mike Connolly and Joan Meschino)

Background:

The question of how to pay for childcare affects many candidates. Nationwide, 86% of Americans over the age of 45 have at least one child.¹

Traditionally, having a young family has been seen as a barrier to running for office, especially for women who are more likely to be a child's primary caregiver. Campaigning can be a full time, demanding job and, like any other job, requires parents to have steady childcare options.

Problem:

Candidates are prohibited from using campaign funds for their own personal use. These funds should be used for the exclusive purpose of supporting activities related to campaign activities. OCPF has interpreted this language to classify childcare while performing campaign duties as a personal expense rather than a campaign expense.

In today's modern workforce, it is no longer realistic to expect one parent to stay home to provide free childcare. 76% of all mothers and 95% of all fathers work full-time² and rely on outside childcare. Massachusetts has the highest average cost of childcare in the nation. The average cost of a year in an infant care center in Massachusetts is over \$20,000, while the median income for a single parent is only \$28,390.³

Childcare is essential for parents running for office, but the cost of childcare remains a barrier to many mothers and fathers, creating a candidate pool that does not adequately represent the people of the Commonwealth. Parents of young children and less affluent candidates are discouraged from running for office because of the costs childcare leading to relatively more candidates who are older and more affluent

What would this act do?

This act would insert wording to explicitly allow working parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for childcare while the candidate is "performing work or attending events directly related to the candidate's campaign."

What would the impact be?

Assisting candidates with the cost of childcare would allow more primary caregivers—both mothers and fathers—to run for office.



Candidate Chris Chanyasukit, taken by James Bardin

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¹ <http://news.gallup.com/poll/164618/desire-children-norm.aspx>

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.nr0.htm>

³ https://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017_CCA_High_Cost_Report_FINAL.pdf