

An Act Supporting Working Parents who Choose to Run for Public Office (S.386/H.2898)

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

Background:

The question of how to pay for childcare affects many candidates. In Massachusetts alone, 25% of households with children have at least one child under the age of 6¹ who requires child care.

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 currently prohibited from using campaign funds for their own personal use. It is stated that 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.

Childcare is essential for parents running for office to put in the time needed to run a campaign, 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. This exclusion means working parents aren't represented.

"If working parents are going to be represented in policy, working parents need to run for office."

—Candidate Chris Chanyasulkit

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 Chanyasulkit, taken by James Bardin

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¹ American Community Survey