



May, 2022 Update www.iowahelpers.org

The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group will be celebrating its two-year anniversary in July, 2022 and is planning a virtual meeting to celebrate and build upon its work. Here is an update of our work and activity over the last year.

Federal Activity to Extend ARPA. Currently, it is still uncertain on whether Congress will make more permanent the substantial investments made in these workforces in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group has continued to share information with Iowa's Congressional delegation and urged them to do so.

State Activity on ARPA. Although Iowa returned some funding from the ARPA, the executive branch has supported and is in the process of using the ARPA funds for both child care and direct care (through home-and-community based services). Iowa has not, however, made a commitment to any sustained funding support, if federal funding is not extended. The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group has met with the executive branch and supported work with both child care funds and home and community-based services enhanced Medicaid FFP to use this ARPA funding, including enhancing the direct care registry.

Other Iowa Activity. Some actions taken in the Iowa General Assembly and by the Governor have been viewed by child care advocates as backward steps, however, as described in the Save the Children press release (at end of this update). Many advocates also are very concerned about the tax cuts enacted this session, which when phased in could severely limit the capacity of state government to sustain even current funding levels and the current support government provides for this workforce.

SCR 104. On March 10, 2022, Iowa Senate Democrats introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution 104 "calling upon the President of the United States, the United States Congress, the Governor, the executive branch of Iowa, and the Iowa General Assembly to work to improve communities by bolstering the care workforce." The resolution is a slight adaptation of HCR8 introduced last year, and describes the essential work direct care workers, community health workers, and child care workers do and the need for government to better resource and support them. The resolution provides a basis for electoral dialogue among candidates for both state and national office. The Iowa Helping Community Working Group sent an email to all sponsors thanking them for their leadership, and to all remaining

members of the Iowa General Assembly urging attention to the contents of SCR104 and a policy dialogue and action to support them.

Link to SCR104 -- <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=SCR104&ga=89>

Pivoting to the 2022 Elections. The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group has sent an email introduction to all Iowa candidates for state and national office. The Group is planning to continue to work to elevate policy issues related to supporting direct care, child care, and community health workers at both the federal and state levels. The introductory email is provided at the end of this update.

Common Good Iowa recommendation. Common Good Iowa's report released in April 2022, *The Cost of Living in Iowa 2022*, provides detailed fiscal information on the status of working Iowa families, showing that 15 percent of all working households do not earn enough to meet even a bare-bones, basic needs budget. Workers in the caring economy are over-represented in this group and more likely to be dependent upon government in financing their services. The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group has requested that Common Good Iowa provide a presentation on this report at an upcoming general meeting. The report's policy agenda in this area are aligned with those put forward by the Iowa Helping Community Policy Group and shown in the insert.

Link to the Narrative Report: <https://www.commongoodiowa.org/data/cost-of-living-in-iowa/cost-of-living-in-iowa-2022>

Link to Recommendations: <https://www.commongoodiowa.org/data/cost-of-living-in-iowa/cost-of-living-in-iowa-policy-agenda> The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group is now shifting its focus to elevating issues related to the helping community during the 2022 elections. One theme the Group is exploring is how investments in this workforce represent a vital part of any pro-family political agenda.

COST OF LIVING IN IOWA – 2022

***Recommendation 2. Raise reimbursements to boost workers' wages.** Workers in the caring economy, including those in child care and a variety of health care settings, perform essential services but are among the lowest paid — even as families needing care struggle to pay for it. The underlying economics of these fields are so strained it simply requires more robust public-sector investment to fill the gap.*

- (Federal) Include **provisions to increase the pay of early care and education workers** in any new federal initiatives to help families afford child care.
- (Federal) Increase **Medicaid reimbursement** for Home- and Community-Based Services to improve the pay of direct-care workers.
- (State) Increase **Child Care Assistance reimbursement rates** paid to Iowa providers to the federal standard and expand investments in WAGE\$, a salary supplement for child care workers.
- (State) Regularly adjust **Medicaid reimbursements** for services by direct-care workers so they earn at least a basic-needs wage.

Save the Children Assessment. The national Save the Children office released a May 3rd press release, *Advocates Disappointed with Legislative 'Solutions' to Iowa Child Care Crisis*. When other states have

taken actions to expand and enhance state support for child care, the release describes the two pieces of legislation – HF2127 and 2198 – as steps backward in support of quality and affordable child care.

EMAIL TO CANDIDATES FOR THE IOWA STATE AND FEDERAL OFFICES

Dear Candidate:

Thank you for your commitment to public service and offering yourself as a candidate for the Iowa General Assembly. I want to introduce you to the Iowa Helping Community Policy Group and its emphasis upon supporting essential, frontline workers in the helping fields (child care workers, direct care workers providing home and community-based and nursing home and hospital services, and public health workers) through public policy.

COVID-19 brought to greater visibility how vital, and yet currently under-resourced, these workers are. The Policy Group has emphasized that this is “the workforce behind the workforce” and a key part of Iowa’s overall workforce (12 percent of all jobs in Iowa) in its own right. A large share of Iowa’s budget is directed to supporting this workforce (much greater than the share of the federal budget), and most federal funding supporting this workforce goes through state agencies for administration.

Our website (www.iowahelpers.org) provides further information about this workforce, and we hope your campaign will draw upon that in your campaign and the policies you emphasize. We encourage you to meet with and enlist those in your district who are doing this work to elevate attention to better supporting this workforce. We also will invite you to participate in our special July webinar celebrating our second anniversary and outlining our electoral education activities. Please consider strengthening and supporting the caregiving workforce as part of your campaign platform.

Sincerely,

Charles Bruner, **Iowa Helping Community Policy Group** coordinator

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Advocates Disappointed with Legislative ‘Solutions’ to Iowa Child Care Crisis

Washington, D.C. (May 3, 2022) – Save the Children Action Network is incredibly disappointed by Iowa lawmakers’ decision to pass HF2198 and HF 2127. HF2198 will allow 16- and 17-year-olds to care for school-aged children – unsupervised – in child care facilities and increase child-to-staff ratios, allowing one child care worker for every seven children under 2 years old and one child care worker for every 10 children under 3 years old. HF 2127 will allow child care providers to voluntarily charge low-income families receiving government child care assistance even more.

“The child care policies coming out of this year’s legislative session are deeply distressing and particularly surprising after good solutions proposed by the Governor’s Child Care Taskforce last year. One – a so-called ‘solution’ to Iowa’s worsening child care crisis – puts children’s wellbeing at risk,” said E.J. Wallace, Save the Children Action Network Iowa State Manager. “Not only does HF2198 cut corners when it comes to child safety and early education quality, it also adds to the already-heavy burden of child care providers. How can giving providers the option to take on more children, when they’re already stretched so thin, be an acceptable solution?”

“The other bill – HF 2127 – comes at the expense of low-income families, placing an additional burden on them at an already-difficult time, with the pandemic and its secondary impacts still taking their toll,” continued Wallace. “Both of these bills wrongly put the interests of children, families and providers on the backburner.”

Over the course of the legislative session, Save the Children Action Network’s state-wide base of grassroots advocates have worked closely with partner organizations to advocate against HF2198 and HF2127. Advocates have written letters to the editor, spoken with media, and made over 800 calls and sent over 400 emails to policymakers to shed light on the bills’ negative implications for kids, parents and the child care workforce.

“Our advocacy doesn’t end here. We need Governor Reynolds and our policymakers, regardless of political party, to fully address these issues taking into account the recommendations of policy experts, parents and providers – those these decisions affect day in and day out,” continued Wallace. “We remain firmly committed to working with policymakers to find more acceptable solutions that prioritize children, the early education workforce and families of all socio-economic backgrounds. Iowa’s children – our future – deserve better.”

Save the Children Action Network will continue to mobilize in support of Iowa’s children, families and early education workforce.

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Save the Children Action Network was created in 2014 as the political advocacy arm of Save the Children, to be the political voice for kids. We work to ensure that the issues critical to children’s lives and futures are given top priority by our elected leaders, building bipartisan support to make sure every child has a strong start in life. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).