

## Child care and the election

The presidential candidates have both made the issues of child care and paid leave a major part of their political platforms.

Here is a look at their proposals:

### Hillary Clinton (D):

- Provide 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, covering at least two-thirds of a worker's salary (with a ceiling).
- Create middle-class tax cuts and child care subsidies to reduce costs; cap the amount a family spends on child care at 10 percent of its income.
- Double federal investment in Early Head Start and the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership program, as well as other child development and support programs for children under 3.
- Provide universal access to preschool for 4-year-olds within 10 years.
- Increase funding for on-campus child care and award scholarships to college students who are parents.



### Donald Trump (R):

- Provide six weeks of paid maternity leave through the unemployment insurance program for any new mother — birth or adoptive — whose employer does not provide the benefit. New mothers on maternity leave would receive pay based on the unemployment rate in their state.
- Allow couples earning \$500,000 or less and single parents earning \$250,000 or less to deduct the average cost of child care expenses for up to four children from their income taxes.
- Provide low-income parents with a new parent tax credit of up to \$1,200.
- Allow parents to make up to \$2,000 per year in tax-free contributions to dependent care savings accounts, with a 50 percent federal government match for low-income parents who contribute up to \$1,000.



### How each will pay for these campaign promises isn't as certain.

- Clinton believes that, by increasing taxes on the wealthiest citizens, more money can then be invested into early childhood educational programs.
- Trump believes he can offset the costs of his child care policies by creating better trade deals and instituting tax and immigration reform for additional growth, while ending fraud and improper payments in the unemployment insurance program.

# How child care can spur recovery

## Accessibility to child care can help businesses attract and retain top workforce

BY MEG FRY

Lt. Gov. **Kim Guadagno** was on a roll, exhorting the audience at the NJBIZ Best 50 Women in Business event in Somerset earlier this year.

Pay equity was just one issue for women in business. The increased accessibility of "affordable, reliable, quality day care" was another.

It is a driver, she said, of an economic recovery.

"If we don't have (child care), then we can't go back into the workforce," Guadagno said. "We are the primary caregivers; let's work for that. As our unemployment numbers go down, let's make sure that we bring all women up. And we do it by fighting for things that will make women better in the workforce and make it easier for us to be ourselves."

This wasn't a campaign speech (yet). And it wasn't simply playing to the crowd (though it clearly did).

It was a fact-based economic analysis, said a study conducted a month later by the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., on child care costs in the country.

**Elise Gould**, a senior economist at the institute and a co-author of the study, said the research confirmed Guadagno's thoughts.

"Everyone thinks about housing as their No. 1 cost," Gould said. "When child care exceeds that, how can families possibly make ends meet?"

According to the study, the average annual cost of infant care in New Jersey is



Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno: If women don't have child care, then they can't go back to work. —AARON HOUSTON

\$11,534. That's just \$732 less than the average in-state tuition for four-year public college and 25.8 percent less than the average rent in the state.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, employees should expect to spend around 7 to 10 percent of their income on child care.

Middle class New Jersey families typically pay up to 13 percent of their income for day care. For minimum wage workers, that percentage jumps up to 66.2. And for typical child care workers, it's 53.6 percent.

It's a reason why New Jersey ranks 14th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for having the most expensive infant care.

The state does provide child care subsidies for children under the age of 13 for low- to moderate-income working families via various state programs and agencies. According to the Department of Human Services, a young family of three

funded by New Jersey's Kinship Child Care Services, for example, needs to earn less than \$70,560 to qualify.

Gould said it isn't enough to rely on the government. According to research conducted by Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 60 percent of U.S. child care costs are paid by parents; 39 percent by the government; and just 1 percent by businesses and philanthropic efforts.

"It is a super-smart business decision for companies to make it easier for their employees to come to work by helping to provide or subsidize nearby care," she said. "That results in a highly productive, less distracted workforce of parents. Businesses need to play a role as the labor market tightens and they need to work harder to attract and retain workers."

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## Come network ... and bring your kids: How one group accommodates working mothers

How often are clients encouraged to bring their children to business-related events?

Rarely, if ever. Which is why NJBIZ found it notable that Dress for Success Morris County in Madison included a specific invitation to do so on its promotional materials:

"Please note, complimentary dinner and babysitting services for children 5+ will be provided."

**Mary Jean Barnes**, executive director of Dress for Success Morris County, said that offering has solved a huge challenge in attracting women to the organization's monthly networking meetings.

"We have found in general that our clients are usually dealing with a lot, both personally and professionally, and we want to give them opportunities to focus on themselves," she said.

Dress for Success is an international not-for-profit organization that helps women achieve financial independence and work-life balance by providing a network of support, professional attire and career development tools and training. Dress for Success Morris County serves women from 10 counties in northern New Jersey ranging in age from 18 to 65

who are looking to join or re-enter the workforce.

"We want to help women succeed in work and in life," she said. "So our (volunteer) babysitters have taken the children outside or have played games and drew in coloring books with them while their mothers have attended the meeting."

Though the service has been just occasionally offered at other programs, Barnes said it is always utilized.

She also said companies should follow suit.

"Companies are recognizing that this is an issue that needs to be addressed not as an individual problem but as a society," Barnes said. "We need to make this work so we can get these talented women back into the workforce."

After all, the No. 1 employee benefit that women look for in employers when working with Dress for Success Morris County, Barnes said, is flexibility.

"We try and coach (our clients) to research and understand what it is that companies offer so they'll know what they are getting into when they apply," she said.



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