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Parents Running for Office Coalition Holds Press Conference, Unveils Report in Support of Campaign Finance Legislation

Newly released data shows Campaign Funds for Childcare is a smart policy that is proven to empower more parents and caregivers to run for office.

Boston, Mass (January 24, 2024) - The Massachusetts Parents Running for Office (PRO) Coalition held a press conference on Wednesday, January 24th at the Massachusetts State House in support of *An Act supporting parents running for public office* ([H.669](#) / [S.422](#)). Bill sponsors **Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville)**, **Representative Mike Connolly (D-Cambridge)**, and **Representative Joan Meschino (D-Hull)** joined in coalition with **Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian (D-Melrose)**, the national group [Vote Mama Foundation](#), the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women ([MCSW](#)), the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators ([MCWL](#)), the MA Women’s Political Caucus ([MWPC](#)), the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women ([MassNOW](#)), and parents in public office as they called for a favorable report of the legislation.

The bill, currently before the Joint Committee on Election Laws, amends campaign finance rules to allow campaign funds to be used to pay for child care that would not exist but for the campaign. 30 other states as well as candidates for federal office already utilize this practice – and [new research just released by the Vote Mama Foundation](#) shows that both men and women are utilizing the new policy fairly and equitably in other states.

“For more than three legislative cycles, this coalition has led a broad bipartisan effort in support of modernizing campaign finance regulations to allow for any person seeking public office to use campaign funds for related childcare expenses,” said **Shaitia Spruell, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women**.

[According to the report](#), federal spending of campaign funds for childcare has increased 662% between January 2018 to December 2022. At the state and local level, at least 87 candidates spent these funds across thirteen states at an increase of 2,156% over that same period. 60% of the candidates who used the funds at the state and local level were women, and 70% of the funds were spent by candidates of color.

“Too many women, people of color and other parents have struggled to run for office while being the caretakers for their family, trying to balance caregiving with campaigning. For many, this was too big a hurdle and they never ran,” said **Senator Jehlen (D-Somerville)**. “This bill will allow more women and people of color to run for office. Women, most often caregivers, may run for office earlier in their lives, during child-rearing years. I am grateful to have

incredible advocacy partners. Many organizations have made this bill their priority, including Vote Mama, who collected data and released their report this week. It shows the real impact that this has on candidates for local and higher office."

"Massachusetts is at a critical crossroads in our political landscape. In passing the bill to allow the use of campaign funds for childcare, we have the opportunity to break down barriers that have long hindered underrepresented groups, especially women and people of color, from seeking office." said **Kat Cline, Director of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus**, "It is our steadfast mission to empower and uplift women who seek public office. This bill is not just a necessary change, but a crucial step towards a more diverse and inclusive democracy."

"I was excited to join with our coalition partners for the release of this report which further confirms that childcare ought to be an allowable campaign expense. Massachusetts campaign finance law is oriented around the goal of enhancing a candidate's political future, and the powerful testimony we heard today makes it clear that childcare is as important as palm cards, lawn signs, clothing, digital media and all the other allowable expenses," **Representative Mike Connolly (D-Cambridge)** said. "Now is the time for Massachusetts to join 30 other states in passing this effective policy intervention to help diversify the candidate pool."

"To support parents looking to serve their communities through elected office is to promote equity in government," said **State Representative Joan Meschino (D-Hull)**. "This bill will lead to a more diverse elected body by supporting a more diverse candidate pool, and I look forward to continuing my work with my colleagues in the Legislature toward a favorable report from the Joint Committee."

"As parents of young children ourselves, we were glad to file legislation to empower parental participation in elected office by addressing one unnecessary barrier that may prevent candidates with children from running for public office," said **State Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian (D-Melrose)** and **State Representative Dan Hunt (D-Dorchester)**. "The cost of childcare is something we hear about frequently from many constituents and stakeholders, and we have been proud to support historic increases in state funding for the early care and education ecosystem in recent legislative sessions. Our bill fits squarely within that conversation. To ensure effective responses to the issues that matter in our communities, we need diverse voices and perspectives in our local and state legislative bodies – including those of parents. Allowing campaign funds to be used for childcare expenses will aid in ensuring these perspectives are at the table."

"For many people, especially mothers, the ability to run for office hinges on childcare. For some, the cost of childcare can present an insurmountable barrier that shuts them out of the political arena entirely. In fact, just **4 percent** of state legislators in Massachusetts are mothers with minor children. By allowing candidates to use their campaign funds to cover childcare expenses, Massachusetts can break down a significant financial barrier and empower parents who may have never considered running for office before. Vote Mama Foundation is proud to be part of The Massachusetts Parents Running for Office (PRO) Coalition and to champion Campaign Funds for Childcare legislation in the state of Massachusetts. Vote Mama Foundation is advocating for a future in which no candidate has to consider the cost of childcare in weighing

their decision to run. Our latest report shows the profound impact of this policy and its ability to build a more representative democracy, and we will not stop until this vital resource is approved in all 50 states,” said **Vote Mama Foundation**.

"This report shows how urgent and timely it is for Massachusetts to join the 30 other states that have authorized campaign funds to be used to pay for childcare expenses," said **Nora Bent, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators**. "This bill is one of our top priorities this session and is a thoroughly vetted and common-sense solution to the often-insurmountable barriers that working parents face while running for office. As a caucus of a diverse group of women legislators, our members know first-hand how critical it is to have diverse elected bodies, including parents, to make sound and inclusive policies."

[The full live stream of the press conference can be found here.](#) For additional details on the report data, contact Elise Anderson, Communications Director at the Vote Mama Foundation at elise@votemamafoundation.org.

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The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women ([MCSW](#)) is an independent state agency created in 1998 to provide a permanent, effective voice for women of the Commonwealth and to promote their rights, opportunities, and equality for all. Follow MCSW on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#) to learn more and get engaged.