

Opinion & Politics

Childcare could help economy

Delivering real relief for families

By Rita Hart, Chair
Iowa Democratic Party

The lack of affordable and accessible child care costs Iowa about \$1.1 billion a year in lost earnings and tax revenue. When Kim Reynolds gave her big annual speech at the beginning of the year, she told Iowans that “the condition of our state is strong” and that “childcare has been a longstanding priority for my administration.” Now that we’re seven months into the year, I have some questions for Kim Reynolds. What makes Iowa so strong?

Is Iowa strong because the Bureau of Economic Analysis ranked Iowa as 49th in the nation in economic growth and 48th in personal income growth? Or because Iowans’ hourly pay is lower than most other Midwestern states, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics? Certainly, the Republican-championed Medicaid cuts that could soon put many hospitals in a tough position where they have to reduce services

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By Jeff Kaufmann, Chair
Republican Party of Iowa

Democrats talked. We acted. Raising a family is no easy task, but it shouldn’t bankrupt you. As both a parent and grandparent, I’ve seen how much harder it is for Iowa families to afford housing, groceries, and especially child care. Four years of record-high inflation under Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have left working parents stretched thin. Under their administration, the cost of child care rose by 23 percent. For parents, especially with multiple chil-

dren, it’s become nearly impossible to afford. Democrats talked a big game about solving the problem, but their “Build Back Better” child care plan collapsed, and their runaway spending only made life more expensive. Once they took charge, Republicans didn’t wait around. In less than six months, President Trump and Congressional Republicans passed and signed the One Big, Beautiful Bill, delivering the largest tax cut in American

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Letters

Candidates ‘qualified but vastly different’

Dear Editor:
I attend most of the Board of Supervisors meetings and have been following local politics since 2015 or earlier. The topic of wind turbines caused my husband and I to begin following more closely. The special election for Madison County Auditor is fast approaching. We have two candidates running who seem qualified but are vastly different. One has experience working for our BOS as part time board clerk (along with experience as a property manager) and the other has a background in law enforcement and forensics as well as construction. He has management experience and trains other professionals. The previous board clerk applicant knows a lot of people in Madison County. The other candidate knew no one in Madison County when he moved here in 2020. In 2020 the board clerk ran for county supervisor (as a Democrat). She changed her designation to Republican in 2022 so that she could vote in the primary election. A lot of people did that. Now she is running for auditor as an Independent (which is her right). At the last BOS meeting Mr. Schwarz gave a presentation over his findings during the brief 4 ½ days he was allowed to work as auditor af-

ter being appointed. He found many processes and procedures lacking. Where there were procedures there was often lacking oversight or enforcement. This is what allowed the past treasurer to commit fraud. Obviously, changes have to be made. Many of these failed and lacking processes were previously known, at least to one of our county supervisors. So why were changes not made? Why is it that when our county hires someone to do work, there is no 3-party bid process in place so that all contractors have an opportunity to bid for work? Why is it that one employee is able to work unapproved and unsupervised overtime to the tune of 400 hrs in 3 years? It's because the good old boy system is alive and well in Madison County. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. The possibility of an “outsider” being elected as auditor has many of the good old boys and their entire network worried. And they are screaming at the top of their lungs in an effort to keep things running the way they previously were. I have met Mr. Schwarz and impressed with his abilities, his knowledge and experience. Nothing against the other candidate but I will be voting for Matt Schwarz.
—Anita Smuck, Winterset

Brass Tacks from Rural Iowa

Guest Columnist Barb Kalbach
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Back to School
Sweet corn is being eaten in droves. The State Fair is right around the corner. That means it's only a matter of weeks before kids head back to school. The start of a school year brings the promise of learning, exploring new ideas, and ways of thinking about the world around you. And yet I can't help but think about how we're short-changing our kids by years of underfunding public schools. Too many lawmakers, and especially Governor Reynolds, want us to believe that a 2% increase in public school funding is enough to provide a quality education. It's not. Adjusting for inflation, Iowa's K-12 funding is down \$440 million for the recently completed school year vs. the 2016-17 school year – the year Reynolds became Governor. It's pretty clear that Reynolds cares more about the small number of families sending their kids to private schools compared to the hundreds of thousands of public-school students. Since being enacted in 2023, private school vouchers have drained \$659 million from public schools. This upcoming school year there is no income cap on who can apply for vouchers. This is a massive redistribution of wealth to private schools at the expense of most Iowa families. And private schools are increasing tuition – leaving them out of reach for working class and rural families. Public schools are the bedrock of our com-

munity and democracy. They accept all children, have elected school boards, and have public budgets and audits. When public schools are fully funded, they thrive and so do our children. Governor Reynolds and lawmakers seem less interested in providing our kids with a quality education than they do appeasing out-of-state think tanks like the American Federation for Children. That's probably what irks me the most – that our elected leaders are actively undermining our once envied public schools to benefit a select few and wealthy interests. They should be sent to detention. But it's not too late to reverse the damage done under the Reynolds administration. Iowa CCI's Public School Strong campaign is building a grassroots movement of parents, teachers, grandparents and others to demand public money be used for the public good. That means fully funding public schools and phasing out Reynolds' misguided private voucher scheme. Visit iowacci.org/pss to learn more about this work and to take action in your area. As the school year starts, we should be more like our children and start asking “why?” of our elected officials. Why do they keep underfunding public education? Why are they shortchanging our rural communities? Why are they giving our money to wealthy interests? And don't stop until we get an actual, honest answer. We can't afford to sit back and let a small group of politicians and corporate interests dismantle the public education system we spent generations building. And Iowans aren't typically ones to sit back when faced with a problem or attacks on something we hold dear. Barb Kalbach is a 4th generation family farmer, Registered Nurse, and Iowa CCI Board member in Adair County.

Relatively Minor

Vicki Minor, Editor
editor@wintersetmadisonian.com
Laughter does not have to come from a major source. It could indeed be ... relatively minor.
...

My Aussies from the Land Down Under (Sort Of)
If you stopped someone on the street and asked where they were from, and they pointed and said, “Just over there,” you'd probably assume they hadn't traveled too far, maybe just from the coffee shop around the corner. But if they told you they were from the “Land Down Under,” you'd know they weren't talking about your basement. That colorful nickname is reserved for Australia, the island continent that's small on the map but overflowing with personality. And Australians? They proudly call themselves “Aussies.” I happen to have two Aussies of my own, though not the human kind. One is Madison, a purebred Australian Shepherd, and the other is Daisy, an Aussiedoodle, a mix between an Aussie and a poodle. Neither has ever set paw on Australian soil, but the Aussiedoodle seems committed to the theme. Daisy has a habit of rolling her ball under the couch, which means we're the ones who end up going “down under” on hands and knees to retrieve it. Very Australian of her. While she's no kangaroo, Daisy channels their energy. When it's time to play fetch, she bounces with so much excitement that it's nearly impossible to open the door without getting trampled. She hops like she's had a trampoline lesson, and honestly, if you picture a bunch of kangaroos taking turns on a trampoline, it doesn't seem that far-fetched. Kangaroos already have the bounce, but add a little spring from the trampoline and suddenly they're airborne acrobats. It'd be hard to tell if they're doing it for fun or showing off for their audience. Either way, it's entertainment at its finest. And unlike us, they wouldn't have to worry about where to stash their phones; they've got built-in pockets for that.

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