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MICHIGAN PERMITS THE USE OF CAMPAIGN FUNDS FOR CHILDCARE

The Michigan Secretary of State's Office issued an Interpretive Statement establishing childcare as a permissible campaign expense, bringing the state in line with federal guidelines and 37 other states (plus Washington D.C.) that have approved Campaign Funds for Childcare.

Vote Mama Foundation is the only organization tracking the use of Campaign Funds for Childcare and working to authorize the measure in all 50 states.

NEW YORK, NY — Vote Mama Foundation partnered with Michigan state legislators to request an interpretive statement that allows campaign committee contributions to pay for dependent care expenses directly related to campaign activities and carrying out official duties. The ruling states, [“In response to your question regarding whether caregiving expenses incurred as a result of campaign activities and officeholding are a permissible expenditure of campaign funds, the Department finds these expenses are a permissible expenditure if they are directly related to campaign or officeholding activities and to the extent they are incurred for that purpose.”](#) The opinion was issued at the request of Michigan Senator Stephanie Chang and co-signed by Senators Mallory McMorrow and Kristen McDonald Rivet and State Representatives Kelly Breen, Rachel Hood, Carrie Rheingans, Mai Xiong, and Penelope Tsernoglou – all moms of minor children currently serving in the Michigan Legislature. With this decision, Michigan joins [37 other states, including Washington D.C.](#), that have brought their state statutes in line with federal regulations to approve [Campaign Funds for Childcare](#).

Childcare obligations are a major factor families consider when deciding to run for office. In many states, it costs more to send an infant to childcare than to complete a mortgage payment. This is not an expense working families can take on — especially when campaigning. According to [2024 data](#) from Vote Mama Foundation, nearly [14 percent of Michigan state legislators](#) are mothers of minor children. In fact, the Michigan Legislature ranks fourth in the nation for representation of mothers with minor children. This decision from Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson will help level the playing field by ensuring that no state or local candidate running for office in Michigan will have to worry about the cost of childcare while on the campaign trail. By authorizing Campaign Funds for Childcare, Michigan is joining a growing number of states in the Midwest and over 75 percent of the country to build a more

representative government and make it easier for young families to run for and sustainably serve in office.

“The cost of childcare should never stand in the way of a parent or caregiver seeking to step forward and make a difference in their community. With the cost of childcare at an all-time high, Michigan has made the right choice to make certain that everyday caregivers have a chance to run for office and make their voices heard in the legislative process,” said **Sarah Hague, chief program officer at Vote Mama Foundation**. “Vote Mama Foundation is driving toward a national vision where no candidate has to think twice about the cost of childcare when deciding to run for office. With this significant progress in Michigan, we are one step closer to achieving that vision across the Midwest and the entire country.”

“As the mother of two young daughters and the first Michigan Senator to give birth while serving in the Senate, I am very familiar with the challenges that come with running for office while caring for young children,” said **Sen. Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit)**. “Secretary Benson’s ruling will help open up doors for more parents to run for office, those who might have previously dismissed the idea of running for office because of the challenges and cost of childcare. We will be in a much better position to pass policies that benefit children and families when we elect more candidates that are experiencing some of the same challenges themselves.”

“When I first ran for office, kicking off my campaign just a month after my husband and I got married, I was questioned about my family plans and told in no uncertain terms by at least one voter that a young mother couldn’t be a dedicated legislator,” said **Sen. Mallory McMorrow (D-Royal Oak)**. “But what a disservice to every family in Michigan if we were to have no representation in elected office with childcare responsibilities themselves. This ruling removes a barrier to bring us one step closer to a truly representative democracy - ensuring that parents of young children - especially mothers - can be fully present and dedicated to their voters and constituents without having to choose between their families and public service.”

"Childcare is a crucial piece of the puzzle for parents who are trying to do big things in our communities. This clarification is a significant help for families who are running for office and an indication that we need a bigger strategy on childcare as a whole," said **Sen. Kristen McDonald Rivet (D-Bay City), Congresswoman-elect for Michigan’s 8th Congressional District**.

“Parents and caregivers bring a valuable perspective to policymaking, and Michigan needs their insight and experience in our Legislature. But the cost of caring for a dependent too often stops qualified caregivers, particularly mothers, from running for office,” said **state Rep. Kelly Breen (D-Novi)**. “Working parents deserve to have representation — legislators who fight for

both them and their children's interests. Thank you to the Vote Mama Foundation and my fellow colleagues for helping Michigan become a state where child care costs do not inhibit caregivers from running for office, making our state a place where families can thrive."

"I am grateful for the leadership of Secretary Benson on the matter of clarifying the legality of using campaign funds for child or dependent care. It is time Michigan joins the nation and 37 other states in advancing a public act to allow candidates and office holders to use campaign funds to support their family's need for professional care services. Acting on this legislation will reduce barriers to individuals seeking office and allow caregivers more voice in government and those voices are important for Michigan to elevate and include in all our policy deliberations," said **Rep. Rachel Hood (D-Grand Rapids)**.

"In today's world, many people find themselves in the "sandwich generation" being both parents to young children and caregivers for elderly parents or relatives. These responsibilities, and the large price tag associated with childcare and eldercare, make it incredibly difficult for those in the sandwich generation to run for elected office, at a time when their perspective is needed most. Holding elected office should not be reserved only for retirees without caregiving responsibilities or for the wealthiest amongst us. I applaud Secretary Benson's clarification on this vital issue, and I look forward to seeing our state government become more representative of the people that it serves," said **Rep. Carrie Rehingans (D-Ann Arbor)**.

"This decision by Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson is a game-changer for parents who balance raising a family while serving in public office. As a mom of four young children, I know firsthand the challenges of campaigning while navigating childcare. By authorizing campaign funds for childcare, Michigan is not only leveling the playing field but also paving the way for more parents to step up and serve. This decision brings us closer to a more representative government that reflects the realities of working families and ensures parents can run for office without sacrificing their financial stability," said **Rep. Mai Xiong (D-Warren)**.

"Whether it is at the local, state, or federal level, our nation and frankly, much of the world suffers from a lack of equal representation for women in legislative bodies. The United States has consistently ranked outside of the top 70 nations in the percentage share of women in national assemblies, and as of 2024, the share of women in national legislatures globally was only 27%. While it is obvious that we cannot address these global shortfalls overnight, allowing candidates to use campaign funds to pay for childcare is a massive step in the right direction. It is my hope that this ruling will encourage more women to run for office here in Michigan and that we can continue to make progress in our effort to ensure that women are accurately represented in legislative bodies," said **Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou (D-East Lansing)**.

Background:

In 2018, Liuba Grechen Shirley (Vote Mama Foundation Founder and CEO) ran for Congress and petitioned the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and became the first woman in history to receive federal approval to spend Campaign Funds for Childcare (CFCC). This unanimous, bipartisan decision paved the way for more parents to run for office — 68 federal candidates have since used CFCC, both moms and dads, Democrats and Republicans. The FEC ruling made it easier for parents to run at the federal level, but it does not apply to candidates campaigning for state and local office. Vote Mama Foundation is the only organization working to authorize the use of Campaign Funds for Childcare in all 50 states. To date, 38 states and Washington D.C. have approved the use of Campaign Funds for Childcare.

According to a [recent Vote Mama Foundation report](#), Campaign Funds for Childcare spending has increased by 662% for federal candidates and 2,156% for state and local candidates since 2018.

Vote Mama Foundation is the leading source of research and analysis on the political participation of mothers in the United States. It works towards gender equity by normalizing mothers of minor children running for and serving in office, naming and dismantling the barriers that keep moms out of office and out of power, and enabling legislators to pass family-friendly policies. Vote Mama Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

To learn more about Vote Mama Foundation and Campaign Funds for Childcare, visit votemamafoundation.org

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