



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, November 14, 2024

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MASSACHUSETTS EXPECTED TO PERMIT THE USE OF CAMPAIGN FUNDS FOR CHILDCARE

[H.5100](#) passed both chambers of the Massachusetts Legislature. The bill will head to the desk of Gov. Maura Healey, who is expected to sign it. This will bring Massachusetts in line with federal guidelines and 36 other states (plus Washington D.C.) that have approved the use of 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 — For years, Vote Mama Foundation has partnered with legislators and advocacy organizations to authorize the use of [Campaign Funds for Childcare](#) in Massachusetts. Legislation to approve Campaign Funds for Childcare has been introduced in every legislative session since 2017 but has consistently stalled. This year, Campaign Funds for Childcare received House committee clearance for the first time and was ultimately included within the larger Economic Development bill package, H.5100. Today, the Massachusetts Legislature overwhelmingly supported H.5100, and the bill package has been sent to Governor Maura Healey to sign into law. With this move, [Massachusetts will join 36 other states and Washington D.C.](#) that have approved Campaign Funds for Childcare.

It is no secret that the cost of childcare is a barrier that holds millions of parents back. It is also a hurdle that severely impacts the representation of parents and caregivers, especially mothers, in office. In fact, according to [2024 data from Vote Mama Foundation](#), just [4.5 percent](#) of Massachusetts state legislators are mothers with minor children. The adoption of H.5100 removes a significant barrier that has historically kept parents and caregivers out of the political arena and comes at no expense to taxpayers or the state. By authorizing the use of campaign funds to pay for childcare expenses directly related to campaign activity, Massachusetts will empower more caregivers to run for office and bring more advocates for American children and families to the decision-making table.

Vote Mama Foundation was honored to partner with Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville), Representative Mike Connolly (D-Cambridge), Representative Joan Meschino (D-Hull),

Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian (D-Melrose), and Representative Dan Hunt (D-Dorchester) to advance Campaign Funds for Childcare in Massachusetts. Vote Mama Foundation was proud to co-lead the Massachusetts Parents Running for Office (PRO) Coalition, which advocated for the passage of the measure. The group includes the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators (MCWL), the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus (MWPC), the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women (MassNOW), and YW Boston. The coalition would like to express our deepest gratitude to House Speaker Mariano, Senate President Spilka, Chair Ryan and Chair Keenan of the Joint Committee on Election Laws, and the Healey administration for prioritizing Campaign Funds for Childcare and including this critical provision in the Economic Development bill package. In addition, the coalition would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Nora Bent, the former executive director of MCWL, without whom this success would not have been possible.

In 2015, Lee Erica Palmer ran for a seat on the Somerville School Committee. As a single mother and attorney, Palmer noticed that while male politicians could use campaign funds to rent tuxedos for events under campaign finance rules, she couldn't use her own campaign funds to cover childcare costs while canvassing or attending campaign events. In 2017 Representative Mike Connolly and Senator Pat Jehlen, alongside Representative Joan Meschino, introduced the first House and Senate bills to make childcare an allowable campaign expense. In 2019, Representatives Connolly and Meschino established a commission to study this issue. The commission's 2020 report recommended the language that is now headed to Governor Healey's desk.

"Caregiving should never prevent someone from running for office, yet the cost of childcare makes it impossible for many candidates to serve. By allowing campaign funds to cover childcare, Massachusetts is breaking down a significant financial barrier and empowering more parents to run," **said Liuba Grechen Shirley, founder and CEO of Vote Mama Foundation.** "I launched Vote Mama Foundation to make sure no candidate is held back by the cost of childcare, and with the passage of H.5100, we're closer to that vision. I applaud Governor Maura Healey and all the advocates who helped make this milestone possible."

"This bill would break down a major barrier to opening elective office to people who have traditionally not had that opportunity. It is the culmination of 8 years of work on behalf of so many advocates, candidates, and legislators. Many of us currently in office would not be here today if we didn't have trusted people taking care of our kids while we knocked doors for our first campaigns," **said Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville).** "Allowing campaign finances to be used for childcare means that more people in our communities can participate than ever before and amplify the voices of those who have previously not been heard. I am excited for this bill to be moving to the Governor's desk."

"I am thrilled our bill to allow childcare as a campaign expense has reached the Governor's desk after passing both chambers. By addressing one of the barriers candidates face when running for office, I hope we'll see a future candidate pool that more accurately reflects the diversity of communities across Massachusetts," **said Representative Mike Connolly (D-Cambridge)**. "Thank you to Somerville resident Lee Erica Palmer for initially bringing this issue to my attention, to my House and Senate co-filers, Representative Meschino and Senator Jehlen, to everyone involved with the legislative commission report, and to House leaders and conference committee negotiators for including this provision in the final bill."

"As the mother of two school-aged sons, I am thrilled that the Legislature has taken an important step in empowering parents to run for and hold elected office by eliminating an unnecessary barrier to entry," **said State Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian (D-Melrose)**. "Enabling parents to use campaign funds to cover the costs of campaign-related childcare will help enhance the likelihood that parents directly inform local and state policymaking. In a state where we are spending significant fiscal and policy attention on the childcare ecosystem and where we grapple with issues impacting children and families more generally on a daily basis, it is imperative that parents of all backgrounds be represented in our local elected bodies and state offices. I am grateful to Speaker Mariano, President Spilka, the members of the Conference Committee, and the advocates in this space for their support of this effort."

"Prospective legislators with children should not have to choose between their families and public service. This bill helps break down the economic barrier of child care and opens new doors to make the path to elected office more accessible," **said State Representative Joan Meschino (D-Hull)**. "Thank you to Speaker Mariano and President Spilka for their support of the bill, as well as Chairs Ryan and Keenan for their extensive research and understanding of this topic. I am excited for the more inclusive election process this bill allows for."

"This is a great day!" **Said Representative Daniel Hunt (D- Dorchester)**. "I'm proud to have worked with my colleagues to take this legislation, that will equal the playing field for primary caregivers, over the finish line. So many stakeholders have worked to make this day possible. In the next election cycle, we hope to see the fruits of our labor."

"The Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators proudly celebrates the inclusion and passage of **Campaign Funds for Childcare** among the transformative initiatives in the Economic Development Bond Bill—a visionary step forward for our Commonwealth," **stated MCWL Co-Chairs Senator Lovely and Representative Kane**. "This pivotal reform dismantles barriers and levels the playing field, empowering parents—particularly women—to bring and sustain their invaluable perspectives to the halls of power. This policy represents more than a

change in campaign finance laws; it is a resounding victory for equity, inclusion, and the advancement of representative democracy. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Speaker Mariano and President Spilka for their support of the bill, our legislative colleagues who championed this bill, our former executive director, Nora Bent, and current executive director, Seble Alemu, for their strong advocacy work on behalf of our Caucus, and to Chairs Ryan and Keenan, and the Vote Mama coalition."

"Better representation starts with removing barriers. Data shows that access to childcare is key for empowering more parents and caregivers to run for office. The successful passage of this legislation demonstrates the power of collaboration and smart policy. Modernizing campaign finance rules to cover childcare is a proven step toward building a more diverse and equitable candidate pool," **said Shaitia Spruell, executive director of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW).**

"The passing of this bill is a monumental step towards creating an equitable political landscape and feminist democracy. By allowing campaign funds to cover childcare, we're breaking down one of the barriers that has kept far too many capable and passionate individuals—especially women and people of color—from running for office. This is more than just a financial change; it's a signal that Massachusetts values the contributions of all people, regardless of caregiving responsibilities. This victory is for every person who has had to choose between their family and their civic duty, and moves us closer to a government that truly represents everyone," **said Sasha Goodfriend, executive director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women (Mass NOW).**

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, 36 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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