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My Turn: Support for Child Care Works

Tim Gage | My Turn | Mar 7, 2017

With a career spanning more than 40 years in human resources, I often dealt with poor employee productivity and absenteeism due to unpredictable and unreliable child care arrangements. In fact, we sometimes struggled to find workers in the first place due to their difficulty in finding safe, reliable care for their children.

However, an American Business Collaboration report states that 63 percent of member employers reported improved productivity while using quality dependent care. Fifty-four percent of employers reported that child care services had a positive impact on employee absenteeism, reducing missed workdays by as much as 30 percent.

In tough economic times, providing child care assistance to working families is crucial to their own financial stability. Research has shown that families with access to child care assistance are up to 15 percent more likely to be employed, stay off welfare, and have higher earnings, which in turn strengthens the tax base.

When families are not able to access child care assistance, they may go into debt, return to public assistance, choose lower quality, less stable child care, or face untenable choices in their household budgets. Child care costs are extraordinarily high as a percentage of income for working, low-income families — comparable with their housing costs.

Subsidized child care programs like Pennsylvania's Child Care Works can be the difference between self-sufficiency and improving a family's quality of life or depending on public assistance and supports just to make ends meet.

Pennsylvania families can apply for Child Care Works online through the COMPASS website.

Through the Child Care Works partnership, eligible families (under 200 percent of the federal poverty level) make a co-payment to the child care program in addition to the state subsidy that Child Care Works provides.

Participating in Child Care Works is a win-win-win situation: Parents win because they have peace of mind knowing that their children are well taken care of. This is in turn also benefits employers, because parents become more productive employees. And of course children win because they are in nurturing programs preparing them to enter school ready to learn and to succeed later in life.

That is why I strongly support Gov. Tom Wolf's proposal to increase funding for Child Care Works in the state budget. His proposal would release 2,300 children from the program's waiting list, helping their parents to get back to work.

Please join me in voicing your support for this program to your state legislators. Helping more families access Child Care Works would not only better support the workforce, but it would stimulate our local economy and make central Pennsylvania a better place to live.

Tim Gage is a career human resource professional. He serves on Pennsylvania's Early Learning Investment Commission.

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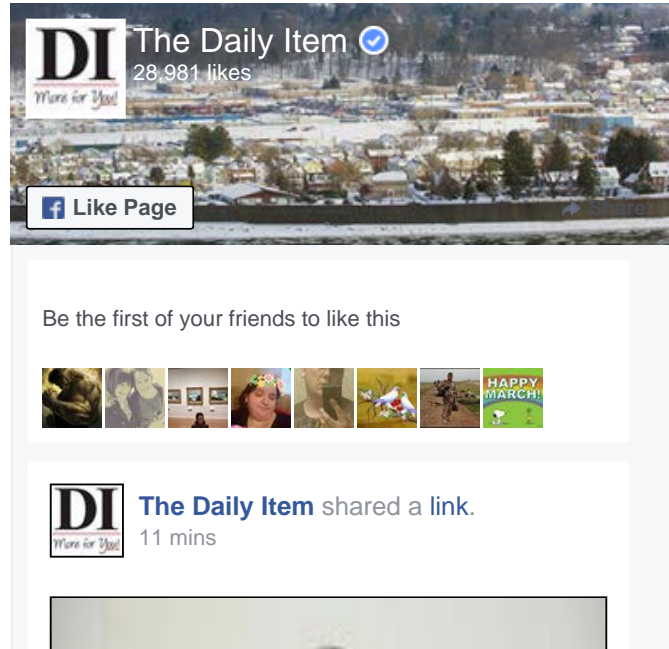
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