



To: Hawaii State Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Hearing Date/Time: January 31, 2024 1:00 PM
Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2405

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and the Members of Committee,

Members of Hawaii State Democratic Women's Caucus thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2405, which would allow political candidates to use campaign funds to pay for childcare and vital household dependent care costs when: such costs would not have occurred but for the candidate's campaign; those expenses were incurred from January 1st of an election year until the candidate wins or loses an election; and the care must not be provided by immediate family members.

We feel it is very important that legislation affirmatively normalize this practice – as it has done in more than half the states.

Women face many hurdles in the political arena. Women are **15 times more likely** than men to be responsible for the majority of childcare. If a mother wants to run for office, they are harshly judged for “not focusing on their family”; or are disfavored for being “unavailable” to constituents. Instead of seizing opportunities in the prime of their professional lives, mothers who would be candidates are inclined to wait until their children are grown before running for office. By then, they are set-back and unable to achieve leadership roles at the same rate as men. The sooner mothers run for office, the sooner their seniority will count.

Moreover, this proposal would be in keeping with movement on the national level. In 1995, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) granted a request from Louisiana Republican Rep. Jim McCrery to use campaign funds for babysitting while his wife joined him at campaign events. In 2018, congressional candidate in New York, Grechen Shirley successfully petitioned the FEC to use campaign money for child care. Drawing on its decision on Rep. McCrery's 1995 request from 23 years earlier, the FEC unanimously granted Shirley's petition.

Since then, 51 federal candidates, including Republican men, have availed themselves of this pro-family change. In 2020, federal candidates increased their child care spending by 311 percent over the 2018 cycle.

The idea is now spreading to the states, **with at least 28** having enacted similar legislation,. Hawaii, the state which sent Patsy Mink to D.C. – mother of Title IX - *should* be among the first to pass this legislation. Sadly, it is poised to be one of the last.

Furthermore, this is a gender-neutral, non-partisan proposal that will profoundly lighten the burden not only felt by women, but by all caregivers, minorities, and those with low-middle income; which in turn, will increase their representation in elected office.

For example, although more than 73 percent of campaign funds spent on childcare was by female candidates, women only made up 29% of U.S. House candidates and 24% of U.S. Senate candidates in 2022. Over 45% percent of those funds were spent by people of color in 2018 and 2020. A third of the candidates who report child care expenses were Republicans, growing from 10 percent in 2018 to 30 percent in 2020.

Georgia Democrat Senator Raphael Warnock, a divorced father of two, reported \$39,000 in child care expenses – who, on this issue, stated: “In too many instances, our system is set up in such a way that only wealthy people can serve in these offices . . . It certainly helps us to be able to have people serving in office who understand the expense, the challenges and the logistics around child care and a whole range of things that ordinary people have to do.”

Had it not been for this change in FEC rules, United States Rep. Ilhan Omar, one of the first Muslim women to serve in Congress, claims she would not have won her election. Even so, she still says she “went into so much debt running for office.”

It is now commonly understood that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate effect on not just working mothers, but all parents and caregivers - making clear that child and dependent care is a basic economic issue. SB405 would help get candidates - with real lived experience coping with these challenges - into decision-making roles; candidates who understand the need law and policy that will alleviate financial burdens felt by so many.

We appreciate testimony from the Hawaii State Campaign Spending Commission in prior years supporting the intent of similar proposals, noting “*the payment for care could also be considered as being directly related to the candidate’s campaign.*” However, the gravitas and validation that legislation would bring would tell parents – of ALL genders – that your representation is valued and encouraged. And we trust, as a matter of democracy, that it is. Your support of this proposal will prove that.

Child and dependent care expenses are putting the squeeze on all of Hawaii’s working families in an increasingly stratified economy. The more lawmakers we have who are caregivers, the better our laws will be at easing the burdens felt by all.

Sincerely,

Members of Hawaii State Democratic Women’s Caucus



Good afternoon, my name is Louisa Duggan— and I am submitting written testimony on behalf of Vote Mama Foundation in strong support of SB2405. It is an honor and a privilege to be providing testimony to you today on a piece of legislation that would benefit everyday caregivers throughout my home state.

Childcare obligations are one of the major factors families consider when weighing their decision 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.

[Vote Mama Foundation is the only organization working to expand and codify the use of Campaign Funds for Childcare in all 50 states.](#) Having young children should never deter any parent from considering a run for office. At Vote Mama Foundation, we believe being a caregiver is a resume builder: we need folks in office representing the needs of everyday families. By making this one simple change, we can support young families and their need for safe and affordable care.

In 2018, the Federal Election Commission approved federal candidates' option to spend campaign funds on childcare through a unanimous, bipartisan vote. This paved the way for other federal candidates to do so as well.

[Subsequently, 30 states, both Democratic and Republican, have brought their state statutes in line with federal regulations.](#) States like Arkansas, California, Washington, and West Virginia all allow for candidates to use their campaign dollars on caregiver expenses.

This legislation is a bipartisan initiative for moms and dads alike. As with any other campaign finance allowance, this bill creates an option for use and is not a mandate — candidates don't have to use campaign funds on caregiving expenses if they don't want to.

Even better — this common sense solution is at no cost to taxpayers.

I am thrilled to share that last week, Vote Mama Foundation released **[Campaign Funds for Childcare: A Data-Driven Report on a Structural Solution for Caregiving Candidates](#)**, a groundbreaking report on the impact and usage of Campaign Funds for Childcare (CFCC)!

Our research revealed that since 2018:

- **CFCC spending has increased by 662% for federal candidates and by 2,156% for state and local candidates**
- The majority of federal funds were spent by women



- At the federal level: 46% of funds were spent by candidates of color
- At the state and local level: 70% of funds were spent by candidates of color

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to support SB2405 and vote it out of committee.