



CARE ON THE BALLOT

How care issues & family budgets are driving vote choices across presidential and Senate battleground states.

AUGUST 2024



Battleground Voters Support Candidates Who Prioritize Care Issues & Family Budgets

As people are forced to make difficult decisions between caring for their families and paying the bills, they are also making clear decisions on which candidates to support in 2024.

Working families keep our economy moving. From child care providers caring for our next generation of leaders so parents can go to work, to care workers providing quality care for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and the thousands of Americans who provide unpaid care for loved ones, our economy would not survive without working families.

Yet, our economy is not set up to support working families. Too often, families are forced to make impossible decisions between caring for their families and paying the bills. But it does not have to be this way. We can build an economy that respects and supports working families – and voters know this.

Fortunately, Vice President Kamala Harris, Governor Tim Walz and Democrats in Congress are committed to investing in programs to support working families, and they have the track records to back it up.

Vice President Harris has spent her entire career fighting for the safety, wellbeing and health of working families. As Vice President, Harris cast the tie-breaking votes in the Senate for passage of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Inflation Reduction Act – historic pieces of legislation that lowered the cost of child care and prescription drugs for millions of American families. Since the beginning of her campaign, she has put the need for paid family and medical leave, affordable child and elder care and lower cost prescription drugs front and center, underscoring that she will continue to be a tireless champion for families as president.

The Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy (CFFE) PAC has teams in battleground states across the country, and we have been talking to voters about policies that support families, and where the candidates on their ballots stand on care issues. The stories below illustrate how critical a candidate's positions on care issues are to battleground voters in Georgia, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.



Aquasia Deshay



Jonesboro, GA



Aquasia Deshay is a single mother of two who moved from Florida to Georgia seeking better economic opportunities. Sadly, what she found was an overburdened child care system that was made worse by the pandemic. Aquasia spent months searching for child care for her toddler son who also has autism. His special circumstances made it especially difficult to find care.

Thankfully, Aquasia was made aware of Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS), a financial assistance program to help families afford child care. Aquasia could not afford care without financial assistance, so she applied immediately. During the 18 months it took to enroll in financial assistance, she was forced to take night shifts while she waited to hear back from the state. This meant that Aquasia's older daughter bore care responsibilities for her son while Aquasia worked and missed out on time with both of her children.

After working a 12-hour shift Aquasia took her daughter to school and then cared for her son. Between working during the night and caring for her son during the day, she frequently slept a few hours a night. Because she was constantly exhausted, she struggled to keep a job and almost lost her apartment.

Thanks to CAPS, which received additional funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, Aquasia's son is now enrolled in both speech therapy and at a center they love, allowing her to seek full-time, daytime employment.

Aquasia wants to see increased funding for child care programs which is why she's supporting Vice President Kamala Harris. The additional funds that the vice president and Democrats are fighting for would make it possible for her family and families like hers to care for themselves.

"I am extremely grateful to be in the position I am now. My son and daughter are thriving and it finally feels like we'll be okay. I think about the time that I missed with both of them and I know that I can never get it back. I am supporting Vice President Harris and Democrats up and down the ballot so we can permanently expand increased funding for CAPS, and ensure everyone can keep their families moving forward."

- Aquasia



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Asia Hooker



Covington, GA



Asia Hooker is a 31 year old, first time expectant mother, and early childhood educator in Covington, Georgia. She loves her work and over the last year she's been named employee of the month twice. Like many women, Asia is experiencing a difficult, high-risk pregnancy, requiring her to adjust her workload and to frequently visit the doctor. Due to the adjustments she has had to make to protect her baby, Asia feels that she has been targeted and treated differently by her employer. Asia worries everyday about her health, the health of her unborn child, and the financial stability of her family.

Adding to her stress is Asia's lack of paid family and medical leave to care for herself and her child after she gives birth. Asia is ineligible for disability insurance due to the timing of her enrollment and this loss of a critical resource has only further compounded the financial worries of her and her husband. Despite the fear of becoming a one-income household, they've made the difficult decision for Asia to leave the workforce once their baby arrives. While they feel this decision is the best one for their family, it has left Asia struggling mentally and physically.

Asia and her husband plan to support Vice President Kamala Harris because this issue is a make or break one for them. Asia believes paid family and medical leave should be available and accessible to everyone who needs it, especially expectant mothers who are undergoing increased mental and physical stress. They believe Vice President Harris can deliver on these needed changes.

“My story is not unique. Too many women and families are forced to make impossible decisions between their mental and physical health and their ability to support their families financially. We need real, systemic change to ensure healthier outcomes for parents and children, and that is why I am voting for Vice President Harris this fall.”

- Asia



CFFE PAC



Lee Jones



Ellenwood, GA



Lee Jones is a 59 year old retired human resources director and like many Georgians, her caregiving experience illustrates the realities of the sandwich generation. Lee suffers from two autoimmune diseases, and in late 2003, she was advised by her medical care team that she needed to take a year off from work to deal with her very serious and worsening medical conditions. Lee opted to medically retire from her position a year after her diagnosis. This experience left Lee feeling emotionally devastated because she loved her work. In 2020, during the pandemic lockdown, Lee made the decision to start her own nonprofit disability rights and service organization. When both of Lee's parents were diagnosed with stage four cancer she was forced to relocate from Lagrange to Ellenwood, Georgia in 2022 to provide full-time care.

Caregiving is a very challenging role, especially for me as a disabled person myself and I believe Vice President Harris understands how critical it is to have proper resources such as adequate health services and providers. I'm supporting Vice President Harris because she understands these hardships and I believe she'll continue to be a champion for all caregivers."

-Lee

Thankfully, both of Lee's parents have insurance; however, due to hospital closings and decreased staffing, they've experienced several challenges in receiving adequate care. To ensure her parents received the best care possible, Lee often stayed overnight at the hospital. Lee must balance her parents' care while also being one of the primary caregivers for her twin granddaughters, and battling two autoimmune diseases of her own. She struggles everyday to care for herself and her loved ones.

Lee is supporting Vice President Kamala Harris for re-election because she supports increased wages for caregivers, quality hospital access for all communities and paid family and medical leave. Lee doesn't want anyone else to struggle in the ways that she and her family have.



CFFE PAC



Brenda Pitts



Lithonia, GA



Brenda Pitts is the primary caregiver for her two granddaughters, one of whom is diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger's. Because of the challenges that these diagnoses present, and after several incidents, Brenda moved her granddaughter from public to private school to ensure that she receives the best possible care and education. The move has been positive for her granddaughter's emotional and mental health but it has taken a serious toll on their finances.

The assistance Brenda receives from the state to care for her grandchildren falls far short of covering the full cost of care, including the necessary therapies and medications to help manage her granddaughter's conditions. And, Brenda's insurance company changed her granddaughter's medication to a less expensive option that doesn't work as well. Brenda has no family support with the financial needs of her grandchildren, and their care coupled with her own medical expenses due to her diabetes means that she needs to work as much as possible.

Brenda has taken on several caregiver jobs to help make ends meet, but she continues to face extreme financial challenges affording her medical equipment that she needs to administer life-saving insulin and to ensure that all of her grandchildren's basic needs are met.

Brenda loves her grandchildren but their caregiving needs combined with her own medical needs are making it challenging for her to make ends meet. She rarely gets a break or time for herself, and it's negatively impacting her health. Brenda is supporting Vice President Kamala Harris because she understands the needs of caregivers like herself. Brenda wants someone who understands her struggles as a care worker and a caregiver to represent her in the White House.

"I want to see more support and better wages for domestic care workers. I enjoy the work but it rarely pays enough to make ends meet. And, I want to see the cost of prescription drugs continue to come down so that people don't have to choose between what works and what's affordable."

-Brenda



CFFE PAC



Kim

Wedgeworth



Rome, GA



For the past few years, **Kim Wedgeworth** has been a full time caregiver for her husband's 100-year-old great-aunt, Maggie. Kim and Michael relocated to move in with Aunt Maggie and ensure that she can live out her remaining years in her home. Michael works outside of the home and Kim provides for all of Aunt Maggie's needs, a full time job that prevents her from obtaining outside work.

Despite regularly submitting applications, Kim's attempts to find remote work have been unsuccessful, in part because there are few full-time employment opportunities that can accommodate her caregiving responsibilities. Kim and Michael are not eligible for Medicaid or other financial assistance, and are without access to essential resources.

“The fact that I’m ineligible to receive support and benefits through Medicaid illustrates the cracks in our existing support systems for caregivers. The absence of assistance not only adds to the burden of caregiving but also exacerbates feelings of isolation and loneliness. We need change now, and that’s why I am voting to elect Vice President Harris.”

—Kim

Although Kim describes caring for Aunt Maggie as one of the most rewarding experiences of her life, loneliness and isolation come with it. Kim says the isolation got worse during the pandemic and now that things have returned to “normal” she’s finding it difficult to rejoin the workforce and her community. Because of this, creating community and uplifting the needs of those who care for aging family members are a passion for Kim and she has become an advocate for changes to our country’s care policies, particularly aging care for our seniors.

Kim and Michael are voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Democrats this year because no one should have to choose between the care of their loved ones and earning a living. Kim knows these policies are needed by everyone, and should not be limited based on arbitrary eligibility requirements.



CFFE PAC



Henrietta Ivey



Detroit, MI



A lifelong Detroiter, **Henrietta Ivey** has been caring for her community's most vulnerable members. After being a dedicated home care professional for over 25 years, she made the leap to start a business that matches families in need of assistance with qualified home care workers. The beginnings of her endeavor did have a share of obstacles – the start of a global pandemic, and the subsequent strain on the American healthcare system.

Henrietta's home care business has faced two main challenges. At the start of the pandemic, her care professionals could not access the PPE they needed to perform their work safely. Secondly, Henrietta found it difficult to find qualified home care staff due to industry-wide low wages. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which Vice President Kamala Harris cast the tie-breaking vote in support of, addressed those issues head on. The Biden-Harris administration made full use of the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of masks and face shields so they could work safely. Additionally, ARPA made funds available for Michigan to increase the wages of its care workers. While these actions provided some respite, Henrietta believes more needs to be done.

Henrietta is excited to support Vice President Kamala Harris this November because she knows that Vice President Harris has her back. She has demonstrated her commitment to fighting for better wages and improving working conditions for home care workers.

“If I had a magic wand I would change the wages. As a caregiver and operator of a homecare business I know for a fact the wages don't match the work. More needs to be done, and that's why I'm voting to elect Vice President Harris this fall!”

- Henrietta



CFFE PAC



Manny Espitia



Nashua, NH



When **Manny Espitia** was two years old, his father had to leave work to take him to the hospital. On his way out, his supervisor threatened Manny's father by saying that he would fire him if he left. He left anyway, because he knew that his family came first.

Eighteen years later, Manny lay in an emergency room in New Jersey, as doctors tried to pump his stomach after he tried to commit suicide by overdose. Manny's father flew across the country in order to be with Manny in his greatest time of need, and to support him in his recovery. Manny is incredibly thankful to his father, and believes that no one should have to decide between keeping their job, or caring for their loved ones.

Manny is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Democratic candidates in 2024 because of their support for policies that would help working parents like Manny's father; policies like paid family and medical leave.

“There are times when people need to decide whether they will choose their job or to care for their loved one. That is a decision no one should have to make. Paid family and medical leave is a moral issue.”

— Manny



CFFE PAC



Flip Kaifer



Manchester, NH



Just after Thanksgiving of 2018, while **Flip Kaifer** was working at his first full-time job, he started to notice a pain across his upper back from shoulder to shoulder. There were days where he could not get out of bed and drive across town to work because of the pain. Over the next few months, Flip used up all his sick days getting X-rays, MRI scans and seeing various specialists.

Eventually, Flip's doctors figured out that he had a herniated disc in his upper spine, and that he would need to have surgery. At this point, Flip's boss pressured him into quitting. Flip went through surgery and physical therapy for months without having a job or an income, and was worse off financially for it.

"I know that if I had been able to take paid family and medical leave for my injury, my working relationship with my boss wouldn't have been tarnished, and I wouldn't have spent months worrying about whether I could pay my bills. I'm supporting Vice President Harris and Democrats this fall, so we can fight for a future where everyone has access to paid family and medical leave."

Flip

Flip will be voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and the Democrats in 2024 because a national paid medical leave program would have saved him months of physical and financial hardship, and would help Americans to keep their jobs and their income intact should they be injured and unable to work.



CFFE PAC



Clare Landers



Derry, NH



Clare Landers is a full-time nurse who also provides care for her husband, who experiences several disabilities.

She has had to take time off of work to be home with her husband many times. The longest she's taken off was six weeks, when he had his toes amputated. He has type 1 diabetes, so she also helps him manage that by doing things like checking his blood sugar regularly. When he had open heart surgery, she had to use all of her earned vacation time to be with him, meaning she had no remaining time left to take off for herself if she needed it.

During her husband's last surgery, Clare's doctor suggested that she take family leave, but she had no paid leave left. She had to collect unemployment instead. Clare was struggling, trying to balance work, and caring for her husband, along with all her family responsibilities and paying the bills.

Clare had to return to work much earlier than she should have, because they needed the income and health insurance. That's why Clare is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Democratic candidates in 2024, because they support policies like paid family and medical leave that help working families like Clare's.

“With paid family leave, I wouldn't have had to use all my vacation time, and I could have spent the proper amount of time to be with my husband. I wouldn't have had to worry about health insurance, or bills, when I needed to take time off from work to be there for him. The last thing you should have to worry about when you're home with a family member who is sick is your finances, but I do.”

— Clare



CFFE PAC



Bonnie Wright



Salem, NH



Over more than 20 years working in New Hampshire, **Bonnie Wright** served as a teacher, a business owner and a data and network specialist. Her husband, who retired after 44 years as a union electrical worker, provided them with benefits through the union. Due to an eye condition, Bonnie was forced to purchase additional insurance to afford the medicine she needed. In 2009, when the publishing company she worked for closed its doors, Bonnie was forced into retirement.

In her retirement, Bonnie has dedicated herself to working towards improving her community; connecting and organizing with community members towards shared goals of improvement. Bonnie is the former president of the local farmer's market, and now serves on the board of a local, nonprofit resource center for children and families.

Bonnie had to stop using her prescribed eye medication because it was so expensive that her Medicare insurance wouldn't cover it. She was forced to switch to a more expensive plan, only to have coverage dropped for the medicine anyway.

Bonnie is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Democrats in 2024 because she knows they are fighting to lower prescription drug costs, so that people like herself no longer have to choose between their health and making ends meet.

"I will definitely vote "aye" this November — for my own "eyes" and for the healthcare of those with whom I have worked. It's frightening how out-of-control medical costs have risen, and I can 'see' that this election is our opportunity to elect the people who will prioritize policies that help ALL Americans."

- Bonnie



CFFE PAC



Kathryn Poe



Columbus, OH



Kathryn Poe had been battling serious health issues for years. Their medications cost an astounding \$60,000 every month, and their family had taken on medical debt as a result. Kathryn eventually decided to undergo a bone marrow transplant because the million-dollar procedure would actually cost less money over time than continuing with their current treatments and medications.

After the transplant in 2018, Kathryn was left with a temporary form of Type 1 Diabetes. This was their first medical issue that required insulin. During this time, Kathryn read a news story about the push to pass an insulin copay cap in Colorado. The story focused around a man who had died attempting to ration his insulin. Kathryn remembers opening their fridge and staring at their own insulin.

Kathryn — still a student at the time — decided to take action. They made a copy of the Colorado copay cap bill in their college dorm room and started contacting Ohio legislators about it. Kathryn was able to get their bill introduced in Ohio, and continues to fight to get insulin affordability laws passed through both the Ohio and Minnesota legislatures.

Kathryn is voting for Senator Sherrod Brown and Vice President Kamala Harris because, like Kathryn, they have been fighting to lower the cost of prescription drugs for all Americans.

I thought about how a person had literally died because he couldn't afford this little vial sitting in my fridge. No one should have to choose between their life saving medicines and paying their bills. I am supporting Senator Sherrod Brown and Vice President Harris because they have already lowered costs of insulin for seniors on Medicare, and I know they want to do even more."

-Kathryn



CFFE PAC



Bethany Sanders



Columbus, OH



Unlike so many Americans, **Bethany Sanders** had paid caregiver leave through her job. She never thought she would need to use it. Then her mom was diagnosed with multiple myeloma.

Suddenly, Bethany needed to miss a lot of work to help care for her mom. Bethany's dad is a retired teacher who makes ends meet as a contractor. Her sister is a small business owner. "We were four working adults, but I was the only one whose income was not impacted by my mother's cancer," said Bethany.

Because of her boss' policy, Bethany was able to take six weeks of fully paid leave to take care of her mom. That meant she didn't have to worry about paying her bills on top of worrying about everything else. She could work with her mom's care team, spend hours on the phone with insurance, schedule caregiver shifts and much more.

Paid leave also meant Bethany had sick time and vacation time to use during her mom's final weeks of life. After her mom's death, she was able to plan the memorial service and focus on family.

Bethany knows that her story is unique among her circle of friends. She recalls watching a close friend lose her father to cancer when they were in their 20s. Looking back, Bethany couldn't believe how quickly her friend had been pressured to go back to work. It shouldn't be that way.

Bethany is immensely grateful that local Columbus Democrats knew paid leave was important and made it happen. She is voting for Senator Sherrod Brown and Vice President Harris because we need to pass paid leave at every level, for every family.

"Paid leave allowed me to be my mom's caregiver when she needed it most without sacrificing a job I value or my financial security. I'm supporting Senator Sherrod Brown and Vice President Harris because I believe they will fight so that every family has the same safety net that I did."

- Bethany



CFFE PAC



Wilhemenia

Hines



Philadelphia, PA



Wilhemenia Hines is 60 years old and has been a caregiver her whole life. She has worked as a nursing assistant. Currently, she helps care for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Previously, she was the sole caregiver for her Aunt Lillian.

Wilhemenia took her Aunt Lillian into her home when she was diagnosed with stage four kidney cancer and was Lillian's full-time caregiver until she passed two years ago. Being her aunt's caregiver was physically demanding, and sometimes she would need to call her son to come over to help lift Lillian. At the same time, Wilhemenia has arthritis – which required knee replacements – and sciatic pain. She also survived a heart attack. Wilhemenia said she needed more support to give her aunt the best care and keep herself healthy at the same time.

We need people in office who will support seniors and rebuild our communities. That is why I am voting for Vice President Harris and Senator Casey.”

– Wilhemenia

Wilhemenia, like many Pennsylvanians, knows first hand the need for solid care infrastructure in her community. Without access to child care for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, she would not have been able to care for both her aunt and the children in her life. Wilhemenia wants to see more funding to support highly qualified child care providers and centers so families have a safe place to send their children.

Wilhemenia is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Bob Casey because she doesn't want anyone else to go through a difficult caregiving situation like hers again. She wants to see them do even more for seniors, caregivers and the child care industry when Vice President Harris is elected.



CFFE PAC



Shineal Hunter



Philadelphia, PA



Shineal Hunter is a fifth-generation child care provider. For 15 years, Shineal ran Family Circle Academy. During the pandemic, she was able to access relief funds from legislation like the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which allowed her to cover overhead costs, retain her staff and keep the doors open. Unfortunately, with rising costs and the expiration of child care stabilization funding, like many centers across the country, she had to shut down.

However, Shineal has plans to reopen. She made capital improvements in her home and is in the process of getting her family child care home license. She's also in negotiations to lease a space close to her house for a group child care home where she can enroll up to twelve children. Shineal is looking forward to getting her child care center back up and running to continue serving families in her community.

I'm looking forward to what plans Vice President Harris and Sen. Casey have for the care industry because they have been very invested. I'm going to do whatever I can to get them reelected because I am 100 percent confident they will get the care industry the support services we need."

Shineal

Shineal is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Bob Casey because of their active support for the care industry. She stays motivated because she's seen through Vice President Harris and Sen. Casey's work the fruits of her dedication to the care industry. Shineal and one of her staff traveled to Washington, DC when President Biden signed an executive order expanding access to affordable, high-quality care and providing support for care workers and caregivers. Once she receives her new license, she looks forward to accessing new funding opportunities to support small businesses in the child care sector through the Small Business Administration's Women Business Center program, which the Biden-Harris administration announced in March.



CFFE PAC



Barbara

Krystkiewicz



Bensalem, PA



Barbara Krystkiewicz shares the work of caring for her 92-year-old mother with her three siblings. Mobility issues have made it difficult for her mother to continue living independently in her home. Barbara's mother has an aide who comes for three hours each morning to wake her up and get ready for the day. While balancing work and their own families and children, Barbara and her siblings take turns each night making their mom dinner and putting her to bed.

Barbara's mother lives on a fixed monthly income from her Social Security benefits, and the cost of in-home care is high. Rates for in-home care have gone up, and it can be hard for Barbara to find care services locally. Currently, her mother pays \$759.76 per week for in-home caregiving. And because she can't walk without mobility aids or use the stairs, she has a rented bed in her living room. However, because Barbara's late father was a veteran, she and her family were able to help her mother get access to surviving spousal benefits for in-home care. Her mother receives about \$1,400 each month in support from Veterans Affairs.

Barbara worries for herself and other seniors who may not have access to the type of support her mom has. Barbara is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Bob Casey because she knows they will prioritize and protect care for seniors and fight back against Republican giveaways to greedy corporations.

“There is no reason why in a country this wealthy and powerful, seniors should have to worry about whether or not they can afford to stay in their homes and age with dignity. We can do better, and that is why I'm voting for Vice President Harris and Senator Casey.”

- Barbara



CFFE PAC



Megan Leinbach



Bethel, PA



Megan Leinbach is a social worker supporting families in an early intervention program that serves pre-K-aged children with disabilities. Megan was a single parent of two young children, one who was severely disabled. At three months old, her older son Ryder had a SIDS event. Thankfully, he was revived, but had a severe brain injury and required full-time care. Megan is motivated to help families like hers because she knows firsthand how isolating it can be to navigate a complicated care system on your own.

Megan was unable to find child care with the specialized services Ryder needed, so she couldn't go to work. Without family in the area to provide support, Megan said if it weren't for a friend taking her and her two sons into their home, they would have been homeless. Megan recalls hours spent on the phone or driving long distances to get approval for benefits and services like mobility aids and night nursing. Ryder also had many extensive hospital stays. She was balancing this all while still trying to care for his younger brother. Ryder passed away in October 2019 at the age of nine.

Just as Megan started to feel like she was on solid ground, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Because of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Megan received an expanded Child Tax Credit, which she used to cover the costs of basics like groceries. Her youngest son was able to get free lunches through summer food service programs. Megan thinks back to how beneficial that type of support would have been when she was a single mother of a disabled child.

“No parent should feel hopeless in circumstances that are beyond their control. I'm voting for Vice President Harris and Senator Casey because it's our responsibility to support families and not keep putting up barriers for them.”

-Megan



CFFE PAC



Benita Tillman



Philadelphia, PA



Benita Tillman is an activist and advocate for community and family health. She's also a single mom of an 18-year-old son. She has a Bachelor's degree in business, a Master's in accounting, and a Doctorate in Pastoral Ministry. However, due to physical and mental disabilities, Benita has left the workforce in order to access the services she needs to live her best quality of life because of the high cost of care.

Benita uses home and community-based services for long-term care so she can receive the same quality of care she would at a nursing home or rehabilitation facility in her home. Benita also receives Social Security Disability Insurance, SNAP food benefits, and utilizes Medicare and Medicaid. She's frustrated that the current care infrastructure for families like hers is difficult to navigate and impacts her ability to work. For example, Benita said if she took a part-time job to make some extra money to do something special for her family around the holidays, she might exceed the income cap for the services she receives. If that happens, she may owe a co-pay or receive reduced SNAP benefits, increasing her care costs.

Benita is voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Bob Casey because she knows we need people in office who will do the right things for our communities. She knows they have made accomplishments, like capping the cost of insulin and allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, and wants them to do even more when Vice President Harris is elected.

“We need people to get out and vote for the candidates who will do the right thing for the people.”

- Benita



CFFE PAC



Heather Butkiewicz



Brookfield, WI



Fifteen years ago, **Heather Butkiewicz** opened All 'Bout Children Preschool to ensure children in her community had a solid foundation prior to entering the K-12 school system. Since then, Heather has faced challenges in retaining staff, which she attributes to low wages and the necessary – and numerous – qualifications she requires, including an Associates Degree in early childhood education.

Staffing became a bit easier during the pandemic when her center received support from Child Care Counts, a program created in Wisconsin through pandemic-era American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Heather was able to raise her teachers' starting wages from \$12 to \$15 an hour, as well as increase hourly wages for teachers already on staff by \$4, which helped many teachers pay their college loans. And for about a year, Heather gave her staff \$250 bonuses each month. This was especially helpful when her enrollment dropped during the pandemic and Heather experienced a significant drop in revenue.

Unfortunately, the grant payments through Child Care Counts have decreased and the program is set to expire next year. To continue paying her teachers this increased wage, Heather has already increased tuition by five percent and she expects to have to increase tuition by one percent annually. Additionally, Heather has had to increase her class sizes to bring in more revenue, placing an additional burden on teachers.

This fall, Heather is proud to support Democrats like Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Tammy Baldwin as she knows they will prioritize investments in child care.

“Without investments in child care, I will not be able to continue raising wages which means I will continue to lose high-quality, qualified teachers. I will also need to increase tuition again which means we will only be able to provide care to select families.”

- Heather



CFFE PAC



Saskia Hale



Madison, WI



For two decades, **Saskia Hale** has been a Type I Diabetic, and in order to stay alive and live a healthy life, she takes two types of insulin daily. One vial of each type costs over \$200, and Saskia says that she uses as much as four vials of each type every month. This means that on average, her monthly costs for insulin can add up to \$1,600 - or nearly \$20,000 per year. And while the price for her medications is already high, Saskia says that she expects it to continue rising as it routinely has over the years.

Fortunately, Saskia is able to access health insurance through her employer; however, her insurance does not cover the full cost of her medications and diabetes supplies – she still pays \$250 out of pocket each month. For the rest of the month, Saskia closely monitors her other essential expenses.

“There is no logical reason why diabetics in this country should have to pay thousands of dollars every single month for the medication that keeps them alive. This is the direct result of pharmaceutical company greed. Vice President Harris and Senator Baldwin are fighting to lower costs for people like me.”

— Saskia

While budgeting for her medications and other expenses is difficult and stressful, Saskia remains hopeful because of policy changes included in the Inflation Reduction Act. Thanks to the Biden-Harris administration and Democrats, monthly insulin costs are now capped at \$35 for Medicare recipients.

While this is a huge step forward, Saskia knows there is more to be done to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable and have insulin costs capped for all individuals with diabetes. That is why this fall, she is proud to support Democrats like Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Tammy Baldwin because Saskia knows they will fight for working people like herself.



CFFE PAC



Leah Hibi

 Sheboygan, WI



In the fall of 2022, **Leah Hibi's** close family friend, Andrew, was diagnosed with cancer and had a surgery date scheduled, yet he did not have any help near where he lived in California. At the time, Leah worked for a Wisconsin-based company as a licensed mental health counselor. Because of the pandemic, her company allowed her to work remotely, enabling Leah to provide care to a friend who is like family.

Because Leah wanted to ensure she could stay as long as needed, she became licensed in California and switched to a new, permanently remote job at a California-based company. This provided additional flexibility, including 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, which all California workers have access to.

In addition to cancer, Andrew had been dealing with lifelong health conditions. His symptoms took a turn for the worse, and he passed away earlier this year. Leah's workplace provided paid bereavement leave and other staff support so Leah could fly to California to pay her final respects.

Leah says her experiences of caring for a dear friend and working for a California company have taught her the importance of programs like paid leave. If paid leave were a reality in Wisconsin, Leah says she would return to working for a Wisconsin-based company, or start her own practice. Leah is excited to support Democrats like Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Tammy Baldwin because she knows they will continue to advocate for policies that help working families.

“While I feel lucky to have paid family and medical leave through my job, access to this financial and health security should not depend on where you work or where you live. All workers and families deserve paid family and medical leave.”

- Leah



CFFE PAC



Kat

Klawes



Milwaukee, WI



On **Kat Klawes'** 26th birthday, she received the life-changing news that she was diagnosed with cervical cancer, and on the same day she was also removed from her parents' health insurance plan. Fortunately, she was able to sign up for a health plan through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) which enabled Kat to afford the health care she needed, with a low out-of-pocket maximum.

Not only did the ACA allow for Kat to be able to pay for doctors' appointments, surgeries and medications for her treatments, the ACA's protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions have been a lifeline too. Kat was born with a genetic blood disorder, and if an emergency bleeding incident were to occur, one medication she would need costs nearly \$90,000. Prior to the ACA, she would have worried about being removed from an employer's insurance for having high healthcare costs. But now, she knows her rights to healthcare are protected.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, I no longer have to worry about affording treatments I need, or being unable to access healthcare because of my preexisting conditions. I have been able to afford hearing aids and receive a much-needed treatment for an autoimmune disorder I was diagnosed with after battling cancer. I'm supporting Vice President Harris and Senator Baldwin, because I know they have my back."

— Kat

Over the past few years, the healthcare premium tax credits – expanded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and further extended by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – brought Kat's monthly premiums down from \$200 to \$1. While today Kat is enrolled in an employer-sponsored plan, the ACA policies ensure her future cancer screenings must be covered by health insurance, so she'll know if cancer ever comes back. Kat is proud to support Vice President Kamala Harris and Senator Tammy Baldwin this fall because she knows they will continue to protect the ACA and lower healthcare costs for Americans.



CFFE PAC



About CFFE PAC

The Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy PAC (CFFE PAC) is fighting for a future where all people can afford to care for themselves and their loved ones. In 2022, CFFE PAC ran a \$13.5 million program communicating with voters about where candidates stand on policies that lower the cost of prescription drugs, ensure paid family and medical leave, and provide affordable elder and child care. In 2020, CFFE PAC spent almost \$18 million on a program in support of Joe Biden and U.S. Senate candidates that spanned Wisconsin, Michigan, Maine, Iowa, Montana, Virginia, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Florida and Georgia.

Learn more about our work at familyfriendlyeconomy.org.

