

Mississippi Employers Identify Child Care Access as Major Workforce Challenge

MSBA Foundation and Children's Foundation of Mississippi report outlines opportunities to expand employer support and strengthen workforce participation

JACKSON, MS, UNITED STATES, March 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Access to affordable, reliable child care is a major factor affecting workforce participation, employee retention, and economic growth across the state, according to a recent report from the Mississippi Business Alliance (MSBA) Foundation and Children's Foundation of Mississippi.

The report, *Increasing Employer Support for Child Care: Employer Engagement and Child Care – Addressing a Barrier to Workforce Development and Participation*,

examines how employers view child care as a workforce issue and identifies opportunities to strengthen child care access. The research included a statewide survey of 300 Mississippi business leaders, as well as input from child care experts and providers. The research was conducted by the MSBA Foundation through a grant awarded to Children's Foundation of Mississippi by the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

Child care access and affordability were cited as barriers affecting attendance, retention, and workforce stability. Of those surveyed, 81% were business owners or executive-level decision makers. Key survey findings include:

- 56% of respondents who offered child care support reported increased employee loyalty, retention, and productivity, while another 23% reported decreased absenteeism.



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- 53% indicated they would be more likely to offer or expand assistance through direct child care tax incentives.
- Only 8% of businesses surveyed currently offer child care support to employees.
- 23% said they would be more willing to provide assistance if the current \$6,000 threshold for the business child care tax credit was lowered and the process simplified.

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“Mississippi employers are clearly indicating that access to child care directly affects their ability to recruit, retain, and support employees,” said Scott Waller, Executive Vice President of MSBA and President of the MSBA Foundation. “Our research shows there is significant opportunity to strengthen our state’s workforce by simplifying existing incentives and policies. Better awareness of those incentives could also make it easier for employers to provide child care support to their employees.”

The research also included targeted outreach to child care professionals and provider organizations, who cited rising operating costs, staffing shortages, and limited capacity for infant and toddler care as significant operational challenges. Roundtable discussions with business leaders indicated that inadequate access to child care directly affects workforce productivity, absenteeism, and employee retention, while also creating barriers to workforce participation, particularly for parents of young children.

“Child care plays a critical role in the economic stability of families and the success of businesses,” said Dr. Ashley Sheils, CEO of the Children’s Foundation of Mississippi. “When communities invest in solutions that support working parents and strengthen child care providers, the benefits extend across our workforce and economy.”

The report suggests several potential strategies to expand employer participation in child care support, including adjusting current tax credits, simplifying incentive programs, increasing awareness of available incentives, and exploring shared-cost models that involve employers, employees, and the state.

“When employees cannot find reliable child care, businesses feel the impact through absenteeism, turnover, and difficulty filling open positions,” said John McKay, President and CEO of the Mississippi Business Alliance. “Providing working families with access to dependable child care helps businesses operate more effectively and allows more Mississippians to participate in the workforce.”

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About the Mississippi Business Alliance

As the State Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) affiliate, the MSBA is the unified voice for industry in Mississippi. Through vision, advocacy, and

policy, the MSBA leads the way to a more prosperous economy for all Mississippians. From the legislature to the shop floor, we are a vigilant champion for our members, and we engage all stakeholders to create greater opportunities and build greater success.

About the Mississippi Business Alliance Foundation

The MSBA Foundation serves as the business community's catalyst for research, leadership, and solutions that strengthen Mississippi's workforce and economy.

About The Children's Foundation of Mississippi

The Children's Foundation of Mississippi works to improve outcomes for children and families across the state by gathering and sharing data, building community connections, equipping stakeholders to advance solutions, and fostering strategic partnerships that strengthen systems of support. As the home of Mississippi KIDS COUNT, the Children's Foundation of Mississippi provides trusted data and insights that help communities and leaders make informed decisions to improve child wellbeing. Learn more at childrensfoundationms.org.

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