

PART 3 OF A 3-PART SERIES

THE NEXT GENERATION

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE
OF THE WORKFORCE



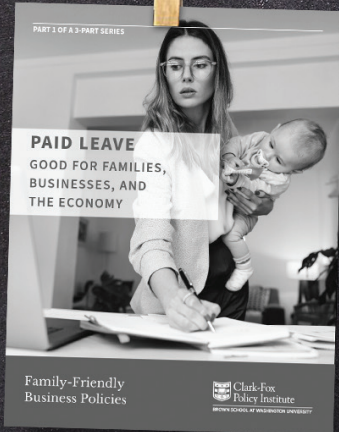
Family-Friendly
Business Policies



Clark-Fox
Policy Institute

BROWN SCHOOL AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

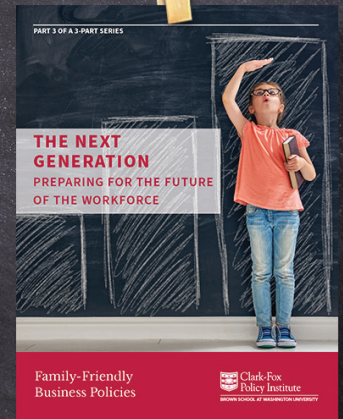
FAMILY FRIENDLY BUSINESS POLICIES



Part 1



Part 2



Part 3

The Clark-Fox Policy Institute has produced a three-part policy brief focused on family-friendly business policies

The evidence-informed policy recommendations were developed by layering scientific research with community voice. They are aimed at supporting employees by providing the flexibility needed to balance the responsibilities of work and family while maintaining economic security. Businesses in any sector benefit by retaining valuable talent and empowering employees to be undistracted and productive at work. The evidence-informed policy recommendations are human-centered, contribute to maintaining a healthy and sustainable workforce, and support a growing and thriving economy.

The third and final policy brief in the Clark-Fox Policy Institute's Family-Friendly Business Policies series demonstrates how businesses can play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of future

generations. Youth are an important segment of our nation's population. Businesses should pay close attention to them by investing in their projected success while they are young and impressionable. Businesses have the ability to influence future career paths of young people, thus contributing to a vibrant workforce development pipeline and business longevity. Furthermore, this effort fosters corporate social responsibility and obligation to their community. Additionally, it provides positive reinforcement for children to believe in themselves and choose a profession for which they are passionate about.

Each recommendation in this brief directly supports the wellbeing of children, the workforce's next generation, and the families who care for them.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Days

Recommendation: Host STEAM Days for children to learn about STEAM professions.

STEAM Days offer a fun, educational environment and provide exposure to STEAM professions. Promoting STEAM Days contributes to a family-friendly workplace and offers children a snapshot into a day in the life of a STEAM professional. Children are innately curious, and STEAM Days could also ignite an early interest in pursuing a STEAM career.

Businesses also benefit from hosting STEAM Days for various reasons. **In order to maintain a robust pipeline of children who are interested in STEAM, future generations need to be educated about STEAM-based jobs.** There should also be intentional efforts for STEAM businesses to promote STEAM careers to children who identify as Black and Hispanic. According to recent data, Black and Hispanic people are underrepresented among

STEAM college graduate degree recipients (7% and 12% respectively) and in the STEAM workforce (11% and 8% respectively). In 2019, about 400,000 students graduated with bachelor's degrees in a STEAM-related major. A STEAM workforce shortage is possible without investment in future generations pursuing STEAM degrees. Businesses can reduce this shortage by offering STEAM Days and exciting future generations about STEAM careers.

Some STEAM-based companies are unable to participate in bring your child to work days, due to onsite safety or security reasons. Businesses can circumvent this barrier by identifying an off-site location or by partnering with local community organizations that focus on youth development and engagement for strategic alignment.

In order to maintain a robust pipeline of children who are interested in STEAM, future generations need to be educated about STEAM-based jobs.



Childcare and Early Learning

Recommendation: Offer onsite or nearby childcare or subsidize the cost by offering financial assistance.

Access to quality, affordable early childhood education is critical to the development of a child. The [Clark-Fox Policy Institute report Launching Lifelong Success](#) highlights the numerous benefits of high-quality early childhood education (ECE) and the positive outcomes ECE drives—increased high school graduation rates, better health outcomes and behaviors, higher employment rates as adults, and lower crime and incarceration rates, to name a few.

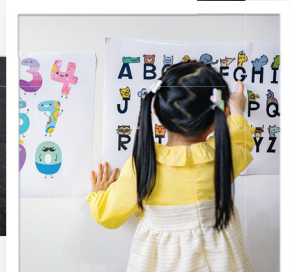
Finding and affording high-quality early childhood education is difficult for most parents, particularly for low-income and poverty-impacted families. The high costs of childcare, taxes, transportation costs, and other deductions can exceed that of an entire paycheck, making work not worth it and forcing some parents, mostly women, out of the workforce entirely, contributing to a reduced labor supply. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, childcare expenses cost working parents \$37 billion annually in lost wages. During the pandemic, childcare became a challenge for parents, due to facility closures and limited capacity attributed to safety protocol measures designed to limit transmission among children and ECE educators. Furthermore, some facilities were unable to remain financially afloat, resulting in permanent closure.

In 2018, Black children in St. Louis were 38% less likely to be enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program than white children. The need for more affordable, quality early childhood education was documented in the [Ferguson Commission's Report](#).⁹ A lack of quality, affordable ECE significantly puts Black children at an educational disadvantage and perpetuates a continuation of negative experiences in adulthood, when compared to white children.⁵

Businesses should make childcare an important component of their business models and recruitment efforts to support their employees. Businesses can provide a childcare option by contracting with an external provider and reserving spaces prioritizing their employees. Businesses can also offer childcare vouchers that can go toward designated ECE providers and referral services for employees. Businesses benefit financially from investing in childcare programs for their employees. Inadequate childcare pre-COVID-19 cost businesses \$13 billion in lost productivity.⁸

Securing access to childcare allows parents to focus on their work and reduces absenteeism. **Both businesses and employees are hurt by the costs associated with inadequate childcare.** Parents miss out on earnings and opportunities to increase productivity, while businesses incur costs from lost productivity and employee turnover. When childcare is provided or subsidized, a family-friendly workplace emerges because employees know their children are receiving care and education in a safe environment.

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Accommodations for Pregnant Parents

Recommendation: Provide appropriate and inclusive accommodations to pregnant employees.

While the Pregnancy Discrimination Act provides accommodations for pregnant individuals, they are sometimes not provided proper accommodations during their workday, such as increased breaks for using the restroom or eating a snack, limiting the weight of equipment or packages an employee is required to carry, or working long shifts while standing.¹¹ Businesses directly benefit from

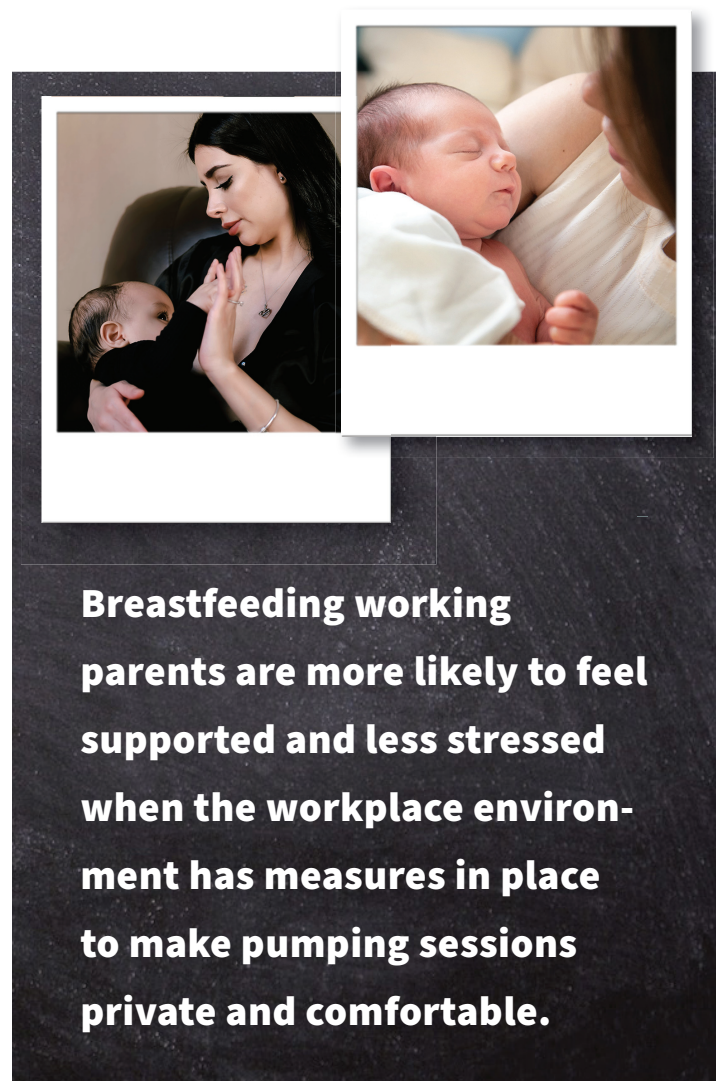
accommodating their pregnant employees in postpartum recovery. If accommodations are not offered, a pregnant individual may need to make the hard decision to leave the workforce. Employees that feel valued are more likely to return to work, after their leave, preventing the employer the cost of replacing the employee.¹²

Lactation Support

Recommendation: Provide comprehensive workplace lactation programs for nursing parents

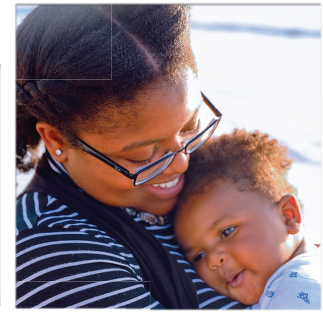
Comprehensive workplace lactation programs are a necessary intervention that businesses need to implement to support parents who breastfeed their children. Breastfeeding parents and businesses greatly benefit from workplace lactation programs. **Breastfeeding working parents are more likely to feel supported and less stressed when the workplace environment has measures in place to make pumping sessions private and comfortable.** This is especially critical for new breastfeeding parents who are returning to work from parental leave.¹³ Businesses benefit because lactation programs can have bearings on a parent's decision to return to work after parental leave. Businesses that have no lactation support programs or policies in place may also deter recruitment efforts for new talent.

(Lactation Support continues on the following page)



(Lactation Support continued)

A family-friendly workplace supports working parents by ensuring their children can have access to needed nutrients from breastmilk. Breastfeeding contributes to improved health for babies, including boosting immunity and supporting brain development. These health benefits save businesses money by reducing the time parents spend outside of work caring for their child's health.^{14, 15} Updates to the Fair Labor Standards Act now require businesses to offer break time and a clean and private space for pumping. Private lactation rooms and opportunities for pumping breaks may incentivize working parents—or those planning to become parents in the near future—to stay with their current employer. Additionally, businesses benefit because healthier babies result in less absenteeism, employees are more likely to return after a birth, and a positive employer public image is created.^{17, 18}



Conclusion:

In order for businesses and employees to thrive, both must come together to develop the most effective plan that promotes family-friendly workplace policies that are holistic and mutually beneficial.

Success in reaching the goals of employee wellbeing and business sustainability can be achieved if businesses center the voices of their employees by listening to their needs and then implementing mutually-beneficial policies. By doing so, businesses have the opportunity to increase their competitive edge in their respective industry and eliminate costly employee turnover, employee burnout, and employee absenteeism. In turn, employees will have access to the resources they need to live fuller lives, partake in family strengthening, and feel valued by their employers.

Note: Although this brief refers to the need for mothers and fathers to have access to paid leave, we are aware and want to be inclusive of people who do not identify as either gender. Access to paid leave benefits all parents regardless of gender. The binary construct of gender is used only when referring to previously conducted research.

Special thanks to the [Gateway Early Childhood Alliance](#) for hosting a community listening session with working parents. This provided the institute with stories and insights from families that would benefit from paid leave.

The Clark-Fox Policy Institute

The Clark-Fox Policy Institute is dedicated to child wellbeing through the development and dissemination of evidence-informed policy. Building on the foundation of scientific research, the institute layers the empirical data with the lived experience of the impacted population. Science alone cannot drive the policy-making process, and the institute is committed to working with communities whose voices are often left unheard. To achieve this, the institute serves as a regional convener and a catalyst for addressing pressing social issues.

Suggested citation:

Strombom, N., Thurman, A., Poole, S., and Parker, G. (2023). *Paid Leave: Good for Families, Businesses, and the Economy—Reimagining paid leave now for better outcomes in the future*. St. Louis, MO: The Clark-Fox Policy Institute, Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

Footnotes

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/14/6-facts-about-americas-stem-workforce-and-those-training-for-it/>

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⁴ Pilnik, L., Butler, H., Thurman, A., Hutti, E., Phillips, T., & Parker, G. (2020). *Launching Lifelong Success: Ensuring St. Louis’ Kids are Ready by Five*. St. Louis, MO: The Clark-Fox Policy Institute, Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

⁵ Davis, E. E., & Sojourner, A. (2021). *Increasing Federal Investment in Children’s Early Care and Education to Raise Quality, Access, and Affordability*. The Hamilton Project, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC.

⁶ Laurin, A. (2019). *The Paycheck Blues: Why Extra Work is often Not Worth the Effort for Lower-income Families*. CD Howe Institute e-brief, 294.

⁷ Stanczyk, A., Adams, G., Adelstein, S., & Lauderback, E. (2019). *Employers, Work-Family Supports, and Low-Wage Workers*. Urban Institute.

Footnotes (continued)

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⁹ Elango S, Hojman A, García JL, Heckman JJ. Early Childhood Education: Quality and Access Pay Off. Chicago; 2016

¹⁰ Bishop-Joseph S, Beakey C, Watson S, Garrett T. Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis. Washington, DC; 2019. [StrongNation.org/ReadyNation](https://www.StrongNation.org/ReadyNation).

¹¹ Pregnancy Discrimination. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <https://www.eeoc.gov/pregnancy-discrimination>

¹² Singh, D. (2019). A literature review on employee retention with focus on recent trends. International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology, 6(1), 425-431.

¹³ Kim, J. H., Shin, J. C., & Donovan, S. M. (2019). Effectiveness of workplace lactation interventions on breastfeeding outcomes in the United States: an updated systematic review. Journal of Human Lactation, 35(1), 100-113.

¹⁴ Brown Belfort M. The Science of Breastfeeding and Brain Development. Breastfeed Med. 2017;12(8):459-461. doi:10.1089/bfm.2017.0122

¹⁵ Jackson KM, Nazar AM. Breastfeeding , the Immune Response , and Long-term Health. J fo Am Osteopath Assoc. 2006;106(4):203-207.

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¹⁸ “What Employers Need to Know.”OASH: OFFICE on Women’s Health, Aug. 2018, www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/what-law-says-about-breastfeeding-and-work/what-employers-need-know.