

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



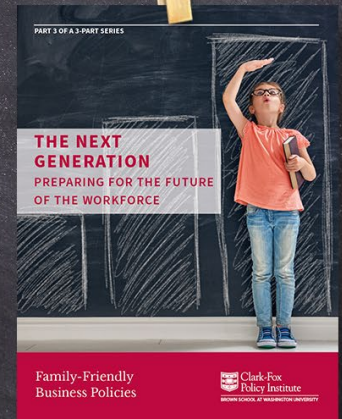
# FAMILY FRIENDLY BUSINESS POLICIES



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. Today's children are future business leaders and changemakers. Businesses can provide opportunities for children to explore new fields, encouraging them to choose a profession they are passionate about. These early experiences can influence the future career paths of young people, contributing to a vibrant workforce development pipeline and business longevity. Supporting and investing in children also helps attract employees who share these values and build a strong community.

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

# Accommodations for Pregnant Employees

**Recommendation: Provide appropriate and inclusive accommodations to pregnant employees.**

Passed in 2022, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations from pregnancy through postpartum recovery. Previously, pregnant workers had to prove that accommodations such as increased breaks to use the restroom or eat a snack, limits on the weight of equipment or packages an employee is required to carry, or less time on their feet were necessary.<sup>1</sup> Every year, about 250,000 such claims are denied.<sup>2</sup>

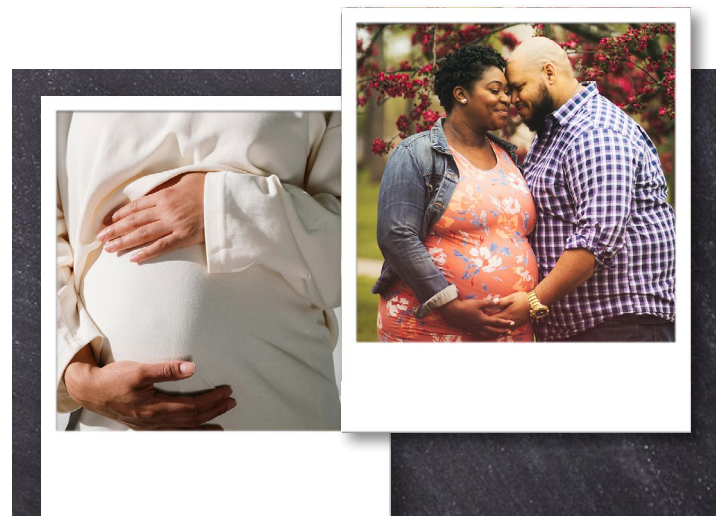
The new law puts the responsibility for providing accommodations on employers rather than the employee. It also covers a wide range of pregnancy-related conditions, including fertility treatments, morning sickness, lactation, and pregnancy loss. The law covers all employees, not just those who have been employed for a certain length of time.

**Businesses directly benefit from accommodating their pregnant employees.** If accommodations are not offered, a pregnant individual may need to make the hard decision to leave the workforce. Prior to the new law going into effect, nearly 1 in 4 women (23%) reported considering leaving their jobs due to a lack of reasonable accommodations or fear of discrimination during a pregnancy.<sup>3</sup> Employees who feel valued are more likely to return to work after leave, preventing the employer the cost of replacing the employee.<sup>4</sup>

Accommodating pregnant workers can signal to other employees that everyone is welcome, creating a place where everyone can feel safe to share their ideas. When everyone feels comfortable

contributing, employee motivation and team decision-making can improve.<sup>5,6</sup>

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act does not require businesses with fewer than 15 employees to offer the same protections to pregnant workers. However, providing all employees with reasonable accommodations is a smart business decision.



**In 2022, nearly 1 in 4 women (23%) reported considering leaving their jobs due to a lack of reasonable accommodations or fear of discrimination during a pregnancy.**

Bipartisan Policy Center. (2022, February 11) *BPC – Morning Consult: 1 in 5 moms experience pregnancy discrimination in the workplace.* <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/bpc-morning-consult-pregnancy-discrimination>



# Lactation Support

**Recommendation: Provide comprehensive workplace lactation programs for nursing parents.**

Nearly 80% of moms try breastfeeding, but after a few months that number drops dramatically.<sup>7</sup> By the time babies are 6 months old, less than 25% receive exclusively breastmilk.<sup>7</sup> Breastfeeding rates are even lower among minority women.<sup>8</sup> There are many reasons why breastfeeding declines over time, but the data is clear. Moms who work have difficulty maintaining breastfeeding.<sup>9</sup> Moms who do not work breastfeed longer than those who do, especially compared to moms who work full time.<sup>9</sup>

Supporting employees who breastfeed or chestfeed (a term used to describe feeding a baby from a person's chest) is good for families and businesses. Babies fed breastmilk are sick less often, so employees who breastfeed take less time off to care for their sick children.<sup>10,11</sup> People who breastfeed also have lower risk of some cancers, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure, which lowers employer health care costs.<sup>11</sup>

**Breastfeeding 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.<sup>12</sup> Lactation programs can affect a parent's decision to return to work after parental leave. Businesses that have no lactation support programs or policies may deter recruitment efforts for new talent and increase employee turnover costs.

Updates to the Fair Labor Standards Act now require businesses to offer break time and a clean and private space for pumping that is not a bathroom. Private lactation rooms and opportunities for pumping breaks may incentivize working parents—or

those planning to become parents in the future—to stay with their current employer. Businesses can ensure employees have time and space to express breastmilk at work by:<sup>13</sup>

- **Educating employees and their supervisors** on the benefits and legal requirements of supporting breastfeeding persons;
- **Ensuring pumping spaces have adequate amenities**, such as a privacy shade between pumping stations, electrical outlets to plug in or charge a breast pump, comfortable seating, a refrigerator to store expressed milk, and a sink with running water to clean pump parts; and
- **Helping employees access lactation resources**, such as an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) to help new parents gain confidence in breastfeeding.

**Nearly 80% of moms begin breastfeeding, but by 6 months only 25% are exclusively breastfeeding.**



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, April 13). 2022 breastfeeding report card. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

# Early Childhood Education Assistance

**Recommendation: Offer on-site or nearby childcare or subsidize the cost by offering financial assistance.**

Access to quality, affordable early childhood education (ECE) is critical to child development. The Clark-Fox Policy Institute report, [Launching Lifelong Success](#), highlights the numerous benefits of high-quality ECE including increased high school graduation rates, better health outcomes and behaviors, higher employment rates as adults, and lower crime and incarceration rates.<sup>14,15</sup>

Finding and affording high-quality ECE is difficult for most parents, particularly for low-income and poverty-impacted families. **In Missouri, nearly half of children five and under live in a childcare desert**, meaning there are at least three children for every available childcare slot.<sup>16</sup> In some Missouri communities, there are more than 20 children in need of care for each available slot.<sup>16</sup>

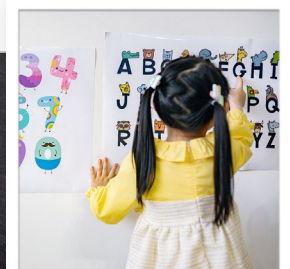
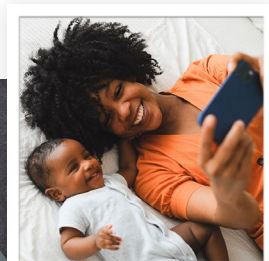
Black children in St. Louis are 38% less likely to be enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program than White children.<sup>17</sup> The need for more affordable quality ECE was documented in the [Ferguson Commission's Report](#).<sup>18</sup> A lack of quality affordable ECE puts Black children at an educational disadvantage and perpetuates a continuation of negative experiences in adulthood when compared to White children.<sup>19</sup>

Even when families can find care, the high costs of childcare, taxes, transportation costs, and other deductions can exceed that of an entire paycheck. These costs can make working not worth it and force parents, mostly women, out of the workforce entirely, contributing to a reduced labor supply.

**Both businesses and employees are hurt by the costs associated with the lack of affordable childcare.** Missouri's economy loses \$1.35 billion annually because of employees leaving jobs, not taking jobs, or changing jobs due to problems with childcare.<sup>20</sup> Offering childcare benefits reduces absenteeism, increases productivity, and increases retention.<sup>21</sup> Employers can expect an equal or greater financial return from providing childcare benefits.<sup>21</sup>

Businesses should make childcare an important component of their business models and recruitment efforts. Businesses can provide childcare options by contracting with external providers or reserving spaces for their employees' children. Businesses can offer childcare vouchers that can go toward designated ECE providers and referral services for employees.

**Both businesses and employees are hurt by the costs associated with lack of affordable childcare.**



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

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

STEAM education (built on its predecessor STEM) focuses on building connections across science, technology, engineering, art, and math so that young people can be prepared to creatively tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

Large disparities exist in the STEAM workforce. Black and Hispanic people are underrepresented among STEAM college graduate degree recipients (7% and 12% respectively) and in the STEAM workforce (9% and 8% respectively).<sup>22</sup> Women make up 51% of the workforce but just 35% of the STEM field.<sup>23</sup> These disparities often begin at an early age. Second-grade girls report lower confidence in their math ability than their boy peers (no performance difference occurred).<sup>24</sup>

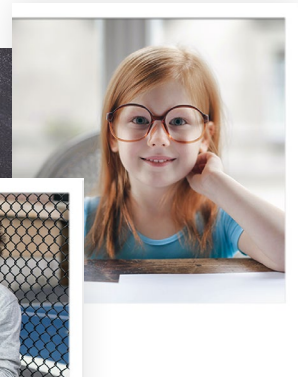
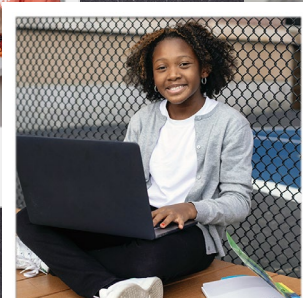
In 2022, about 435,000 students graduated with bachelor's degrees in a STEM-related major.<sup>25</sup> A STEAM workforce shortage is possible without investment in future generations pursuing STEAM degrees. Businesses can reduce this shortage by offering STEAM Days and creating mentorship

programs that focus on having marginalized youth be able to see and learn from STEAM professionals who look like them. STEAM Days offer a fun, educational environment and expose children to STEAM professions.

**To maintain a robust pipeline of children who are interested in STEAM, future generations need to be educated about STEAM-based jobs.** Children are innately curious, and STEAM programming could ignite an early interest in pursuing a STEAM career. STEAM businesses should make intentional efforts to promote STEAM careers to children from marginalized populations.

Bring your child/a kid to work day offers an opportunity to highlight STEAM careers. Some STEAM companies are unable to participate in bring your child to work days due to on-site safety or security reasons. Businesses can circumvent this barrier by identifying an off-site location or partnering with local community organizations focused on youth development and engagement.

**To create the future STEAM workforce, young people need to be educated about STEAM-based jobs.**



# Conclusion:

As employers, community members, and engines of innovation, businesses are uniquely positioned to drive positive social change by investing in child development and well-being. By supporting employees and their families from pregnancy through postpartum to early childhood education, businesses can increase their competitive edge in their respective industries and eliminate costly employee turnover, employee burnout, and employee absenteeism. Centering the voices of employees and listening to their needs is crucial to create policies that allow both businesses and employees to thrive. Through collaboration and a steadfast dedication to social responsibility, businesses can leave a legacy that extends far beyond the bottom line.

**Note:** Although this brief refers to the need for mothers and fathers to have access to family-friendly workplaces, we are aware and want to be inclusive of people who do not identify as either gender. This includes recognizing chestfeeding (a term used to describe feeding a baby from a person's chest). Family-friendly business policies benefit 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 family-friendly workplace policies.

## The Clark-Fox Policy Institute

[The Clark-Fox Policy Institute](#) is dedicated to child well-being through the development and dissemination of evidence-informed policy. Building on the foundation of scientific research, the institute layers 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.

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