

In 2017, Congress and the President secured the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act — a piece of legislation that helped in many ways to restore our competitiveness, grow our economy, and raise wages for working people. I'm here today to talk about how we can build on this achievement by standing up for working families with new and expanded tax credits which can improve access to childcare, reduce the costs of raising a family, and help families to grow.

Today, we are considering an extension of many components of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which could help to build a foundation for a new era of prosperity in our country. While we work to achieve this, working families in the Greater Lehigh Valley and throughout our country want to see more than an extension of this law because they are struggling and are seeking immediate relief from inflation and high prices.

As this committee is well aware, the last four years have been difficult for the American people. Prices have skyrocketed, wages have stagnated, and home ownership is increasingly out of reach. This has created hardships for people across the socioeconomic and demographic spectrum, but it has especially impacted working families who already faced high costs related to raising children. As we begin the work of revitalizing the American economy, I hope that we can work to deliver immediate relief to these families. That starts with untangling the increasingly complex financial knot of parenthood, starting at the beginning.

For parents, the stress and financial difficulty of raising children starts early. According to the [Department of Labor](#), only 27% of civilian workers have access to paid family leave.¹ That means the majority of workers, especially prospective mothers, face major strains and tough choices in the first months of parenthood. Many parents cannot afford to take time off work in order to be with their newborns. Some families may be able to rely on friends or relatives, but many don't have that luxury.

That's why I'm proposing that the employer tax credit for paid family and medical leave be doubled and made permanent. This credit — created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act for 2018-2019 and then extended through this year — has made a meaningful difference for millions of parents. Now, we have an opportunity to go further and make paid family leave a reality for even more American families.

We also know that the challenges facing working families go far beyond the first weeks of a newborn's life. Childcare costs have become an extraordinary challenge for millions of parents. In the Greater Lehigh Valley, according to the [Department of Labor](#), the median cost of childcare exceeds \$11,000 in 2024 dollars, which is about 11% of the median family income.² Factor in the surge in prices for things such as food, energy, housing, healthcare, and it's clear that working families are facing an extraordinary challenge.

¹ *Press Release: US Department of Labor announces new research that underscores benefits of paid family and medical leave*, U.S. Department of Labor, 11/21/24

² *Childcare Prices by Age of Children and Care Setting 2022*, U.S. Department of Labor, accessed 1/21/2025

This also means that working parents face the question of whether or not to join the labor force. For many, the take-home pay after accounting for the cost of childcare is negligible, leading many to stay at home when they would otherwise like to work. At a time when many employers say they need more workers, we don't want parents wrestling with the question of whether it makes more financial sense to work or to stay at home.

We can help to solve this problem, support working families, and revitalize the labor force by creating a childcare tax credit. Such a credit, provided to working parents of young children, would help to offset the enormous cost of childcare and reduce the growing financial burden on families at a time when they need the help.

Of course, we know that the cost of raising children continues through their entire upbringing. We can alleviate that cost by expanding the Child Tax Credit to better reflect the challenges families face. The current credit, while helpful, no longer sufficiently addresses the rise in costs that have afflicted families. Increasing the credit would provide much-needed relief, giving families the resources they need to thrive. We can further improve the credit by allowing mothers to claim it during pregnancy, and by making the credit more accessible to working-class families by allowing it to offset payroll and income taxes.

To bring this full-circle, we can't forget those who are trying to start or grow their families. Whether it's through adoption or IVF, many hopeful parents face daunting barriers. Expanding the current Adoption Tax Credit — capped at \$16,810 for 2024 — to \$25,000 would help offset the high costs associated with adoption, such as legal fees, agency expenses, and travel. Similarly, creating a matching \$25,000 tax credit for IVF expenses would provide critical relief for families navigating infertility.

These steps are more than just financial relief — they reflect a commitment to helping families grow and increasing opportunity for all. For too long, working families in America have had to take a back seat to other priorities. Now, we have an opportunity to change that. By reducing the barriers to building or growing a family, we can empower parents to grow their families and ensure that every child has the chance to thrive.