

## Strengthen Indiana's Infrastructure Workforce by Supporting Parents in Training

Indiana has a strong commitment to being a pro-family state, recognizing that policies supporting working parents are not just beneficial for families but also a smart investment in our workforce and future generations. Governor Braun's recent executive order expanding parental leave for state employees underscores this commitment, emphasizing the importance of policies that help parents balance their personal and professional lives.

One way Indiana can build on this investment is by expanding access to child care for parents in workforce training programs for in-demand jobs in transportation and infrastructure. And the best part? Indiana can do this without spending a single state dollar.

- **Child care is a significant barrier**—especially for jobs that require on-site training and hands-on experience, such as those in transportation and infrastructure. Without access to child care, many parents struggle to complete the training needed to secure good jobs. In contrast, when child care is provided, it has been shown to significantly improve the training completion rates for registered apprenticeships—for both mothers and fathers..
- **Transportation and infrastructure jobs provide a pathway to family-sustaining careers.** Jobs in transportation and infrastructure are more likely to pay family-sustaining wages. In Indiana, the median hourly wage for highway maintenance workers is \$22.40/hour and paving equipment operators is \$25.07/hour, while fast food and counter workers earn a median hourly wage of \$13.35/hour. However, without child care, many working parents are locked out of the training programs that lead to these opportunities.
- **Federal DOT funding already allows for workforce development investments, including support for child care.** Under the 504(e) provision of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, states have the flexibility to allocate federal transportation dollars toward supportive services like child care—without dipping into state funds. States such as Oregon have leveraged this provision by legislating that a portion of these funds go toward child care, leading to significant increases in apprenticeship completion rates.<sup>1</sup>

Indiana should take advantage of the flexibility under section 504(e) of the FAST Act to expand access to child care for Hoosiers participating in workforce training. In doing so, it can strengthen its workforce, support working families, and help more parents complete training for in-demand jobs—all while staying true to its pro-family values.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2009, Oregon created the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program, which legislated one-half of one percent of federal funds received from the Department of Transportation to be spent on training and support to grow the highway construction workforce. A 2022 evaluation of the program found that apprenticeship completion rates for both mothers and fathers improved considerably, with women and people of color who received childcare subsidies 21 percent more likely to complete and white men who received support 37 percent more likely to complete.