http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/childcare-infant-s5.jpg

Paying for quality daycare has become a major burden for working families, and a targeted tax credit can ease that burden and help our economy.

LA CROSSE, WI - “It’s like we paid off our mortgage.” That’s how one parent described the feeling when their child grew out of daycare and the family was able to pocket more of their paycheck. The extra cash saved each month was a windfall for these working parents who struggled to afford the cost of child care on top of their home payments, student loans, groceries and monthly bills.

For many families in Wisconsin, the high cost of quality child care is a major burden. While we have some of the highest quality child care providers in the nation, the average cost for infant care is over $1,000 a month. That’s more than tuition at UW Madison.

As Democrats push solutions to help working families, access to quality and affordable child care has become a key focus. With more dual-income households, modern families need workplace policies that will ensure flexibility and enable businesses to be more competitive.

Recently, Democratic leaders including Sen. **LaTonya Johnson** (D-Milwaukee) and Rep. **Melis sa Sargent**
(D-Madison) introduced legislation to create a child care income tax credit for working families. As a co-author of this bill, I support the effort to target more relief to working families rather than wealthy special interests and out-of-state corporations.

This issue is particularly important because we know how critical early learning is for a child’s development. Child care providers are highly dedicated and skilled professionals who provide an invaluable service to working families. They’re passionate about their work and often don’t get the credit they deserve.

Parents who work full-time want their children to receive quality care in a safe and loving environment. We should reward quality care providers and find new ways to expand access for working families. By helping families afford the cost of care through a targeted tax credit, we can ease the burden on working families and help businesses retain skilled workers. It's a win-win proposal for workers, children and employers.

If we want families to succeed, we need to focus on policies that will boost our middle class. Ensuring working moms and dads have access to high quality, affordable child care is one way we can strengthen families and expand economic opportunities. Combined with additional Democratic solutions to expand health care coverage, student loan debt relief and paid sick leave, we can modernize our workplace policies to be more cost-effective and worker-friendly.

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Jennifer Shilling serves as the Senate Democratic Leader and represents the 32nd District which covers La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and parts of Monroe County.