

The Child Care Crisis Costs the Illinois Economy \$6.2 Billion Each Year

Working families & employers feel the pinch

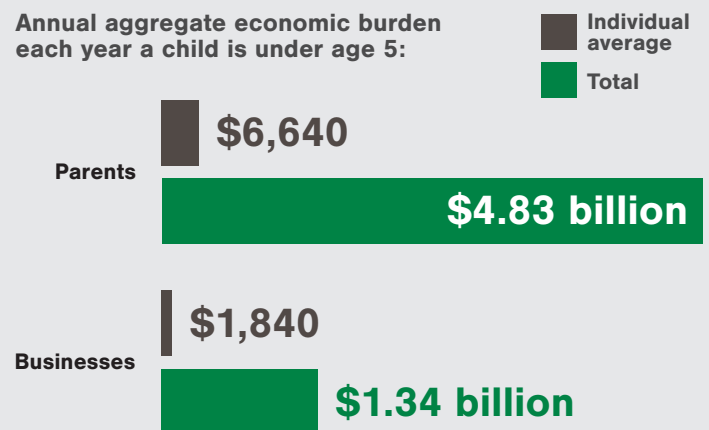
ReadyNation Illinois' new study¹ of the impact of our state's child care crisis found a cost of \$6.2 billion in lost earnings and productivity every year. This economic burden impacts Illinois parents, their employers, and the state's taxpayers.

Productivity challenges affect both employees and employers. In a new poll of Illinois working parents of young children, about three-fifths reported that child care struggles led them to leave work early or be late for work. More than half missed a full day of work or became distracted at work. These challenges had predictable impacts: one-quarter of parents said they've been reprimanded at work, and 16 percent have been fired. As a result, Illinois families lose \$4.83 billion per year in forgone earnings and job search expenses. Meanwhile, productivity problems cause our state's employers to lose \$1.34 billion annually due to child care challenges faced by their workforce. [Illinois taxpayers, in turn, lose \$1.13 billion each year in lower federal and state tax revenue.]

Beyond its impact on the current workforce and economy, the child care crisis undermines development of Illinois' future workforce by depriving children of nurturing, stimulating environments that support brain development while their parents work. Nearly all (92 percent) of the Illinois parents surveyed reported that child care availability is a challenge in some

The economic impacts of insufficient child care in Illinois

Insufficient care for children under the age of 5 costs individuals, businesses, and the state billions of dollars each year.



way. About half said it is a significant struggle to find child care that is affordable and 40 percent reported problems finding high-quality care.

These data show that the failure to strengthen Illinois' fragile child care infrastructure causes economic damage to employers, workers, and taxpayers. Policymakers at the federal, state and local levels must support evidence-based



policies that enhance the availability and affordability of high-quality child care. With wise investments, policymakers can improve the lives of Illinois families today and strengthen the state’s workforce and economy both now and into the future.

Businesses play a role as well, through on-site child care, funding for employees or to child care providers, and advocating for sound child care policies. Private entities, such as faith-based organizations, also offer assistance. Solving the child care crisis will likely continue to require such an all-hands-on-deck approach — with public policies and public investments remaining the single biggest piece of the puzzle, given their scale, scope, and outsized potential for making a positive difference.

1 ReadyNation Illinois. (2026). The child care crisis costs the Illinois economy \$6.2 billion each year. [ilcivicleaders.org](https://www.ilcivicleaders.org)

ReadyNation | Business. Kids. Workforce.

Business executives helping build a skilled workforce by promoting solutions that prepare children to succeed in education, work, and life. In Illinois, ReadyNation operates as part of the Civic Leaders for Illinois Children project (<https://www.ilcivicleaders.org/>).



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