



Policy Recommendations for Members of the Speaker’s Commission on the Sanctity of Life and the Mississippi Senate Study Group on Women, Children and Families

September 2022

Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative is pleased to offer this document to you that briefly details the scope of some of the most pressing issues faced by women and families in the state of Mississippi as well as some policy recommendations.

In Mississippi, single moms are raising nearly half of all the state’s children. Despite work, many remain poor because their jobs pay low wages. They need jobs that pay wages high enough to support their children and affordable child care so they can go to work and remain employed.

In our state’s single mom-headed families, the poverty rate is an alarming 47.6% (Source: 2020 ACS, Table S1702). This is one of the highest rates of children in single parent families in the nation ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)), but this high poverty is not due to a lack of work. Even after the COVID-19 Pandemic wreaked havoc on the labor market and on critical support systems like center-based child care, single mother labor force participation in Mississippi was 75.3% in 2021 ([Committee for Economic Development](#)). Women are half of Mississippi’s workforce (about 49%), yet they are 2.6 times more likely than men to be in a low-wage job and they are 71% of workers in the low-wage workforce ([National Women's Law Center](#)). Despite high poverty rates and a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, more than half of all mothers in Mississippi (50.4%) are the primary or sole breadwinners for their families. Another 23.7% of mothers are co-breadwinners. Mississippi has the 2nd highest rate of women breadwinners in the U.S. ([Center for American Progress](#)).

MLICCI urges Mississippi policymakers to ensure every single mom has the child care she needs to work or to enroll in education/training AND the healthcare she needs as the primary caregiver and provider for her children.

I. Mississippi’s child care assistance program, the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP) is operated by DHS. Moms face significant red tape trying to apply for the federally funded CCPP. Policy makers should ease the application process by making changes such as extending timelines for acting on documentation submission or expanding who qualifies to those who are actively looking for work in addition to those already working or in education/training. Other needed strategies include making child care assistance application navigators part of every entry

point where single moms and their families receive services from the state of Mississippi and advertising the child care program statewide to increase awareness.

⇒ **Recommendation: Make CCPP child care assistance easier for parents to get and keep by making the application and re-determination process easier to complete.**

II. Mississippi needs to use every dollar it can on child care assistance to serve as many families as possible. About 112,000 children in MS qualify. Making this a priority both improves mothers' economic security and gives young children access to early childhood education. Mississippi received an additional \$200 million from ARPA child care funds. Every dollar should be spent as expeditiously as possible to support working moms and moms in training or education. We know if Mississippi provided child care assistance to all families eligible under 150% of the poverty level, an additional 29,700 children would gain access to early childhood education, **4,800 additional mothers would join Mississippi's labor force** and 7,000 children would be lifted out of poverty ([Urban Institute](#)).

⇒ **Recommendation: Increase the number of eligible children served by CCPP. CCPP helps low-income parents go to work and remain employed, yet currently only about 25% of eligible children are served by this important work-support program.**

III. Ensuring Mississippi moms have access to healthcare after they give birth improves health outcomes and creates a better environment for supporting new families. The ARPA gives states a new option to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months with a simple State Plan amendment. This option is available to states for five years. Recognizing that Mississippi must support moms and newborns, the Mississippi Senate passed this extension of coverage in 2022 with incredible bi-partisan support. The proposal died in the Mississippi House. New moms and newborn babies must have access to healthcare in Mississippi post-Roe. Lawmakers must take this action in 2023.

⇒ **Recommendation: Extend postpartum Medicaid for new moms from the current 2 months of assistance to 12 months of assistance.**

IV. Mississippi's state economists report Medicaid expansion would positively impact state revenues each year, would create jobs, would save rural hospitals, would bring more people into the state of MS and most costs would be offset by savings. Most MS Medicaid recipients are currently children, elderly, disabled and blind individuals. Increasing the income eligibility from 25% of the federal poverty level to 138% for adults would create a healthier workforce and result in measurable economic gain for Mississippi. Most low-wage earners who would benefit are women because it's women who are concentrated in low-wage jobs in MS' workforce. Mississippi rural hospitals are closing because of uncompensated care losses, but Medicaid expansion would help fix this by reducing those costs substantially. State economists estimate expansion would add 11,300 jobs to our state. Each year between 2022 – 2027, the state's GDP would increase by up to \$783 million, personal income would increase up to \$812 million and 11,500 new residents would come to Mississippi. State costs would be greatly offset by changes

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in the state's federal matching share (FMAP) from the ARPA (more federal money coming into MS if expansion happens), from uncompensated care savings, from increases in income tax revenue generated by additional jobs and from other savings. State economists project that MS could fully fund Medicaid expansion just from FMAP savings alone for 3 years and even longer with other savings, ultimately leading to increased state revenue each year and a much healthier environment for single moms ([Mississippi State Economist Report](#)).

⇒ **Recommendation: Make the state workforce healthier and create 11,300 jobs by expanding Medicaid income eligibility under the Affordable Care Act. This action will benefit the many single moms in low-wage jobs who cannot afford private insurance, but who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid.**

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Founded in 1998, the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) is a statewide non-profit public policy advocacy organization working to strengthen women's economic security in Mississippi by making child care affordable for low-income working moms, achieving gender and racial equity in the workforce and making the safety net work for women. Learn more: www.mschildcare.org