

Iowa's prosperity is dependent upon the economic strength of Iowa families and the healthy development of their children. First Lady Laura Bush was right in stating that "children are one-quarter of the population, but one hundred percent of our future," and that government has no greater responsibility than to ensure the safety, security, and opportunities of our children.

Iowa's investments in kids have lagged far behind the growth of the state's economy, while lawmakers have managed the state budget poorly, making it difficult to maintain, let alone enhance existing programs and services to meet the basic needs of children.

**As a father, Fred Hubbell understands the importance of these foundational building blocks in a child's life. Fred will renew our state's commitment to providing every child with access to quality education, affordable healthcare, and providing parents with the economic security to ensure a strong life at home.**

### Early Childhood Education

Learning begins at birth, but the formal educational system does not start until children reach age six. Parents are their child's first and most important teachers during these first years of life – but they cannot do so alone. They need safe and supportive neighborhoods, child care or family leave opportunities to provide nurturing care while they work, along with quality pre-school availability. Most of these are best developed locally, within neighborhoods and communities, and with existing businesses and agencies, but the state has a responsibility to ensure they are prioritized in funding and exist in all communities, both rural and urban.

Many non-profit agencies across the state are doing the important work of educating parents on the best means to nurture and stimulate a new child. State agencies and departments can better support these non-profits by pursuing federal grants, broadening access to home visits, and working with the legislature to improve family leave policies, so new parents are educated on the needs of an infant and able to spend this critical development time with their children.

**Fred supports reinstatement of Gov. Reynolds' funding cuts to the Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) program. Brain growth and development is critical during the window of birth to three years of a child's lifetime. With the success of ECI and existence of local boards to administer the program, it is time to solicit community responses to better understand the gaps and deserts across Iowa where early learning opportunities aren't currently available.**

**As Governor, Fred will work to value families and their children and to support parents in their critical role, while looking at all public policies and investments for their impact upon future generations. Finally, Fred supports expanding the Iowa Voluntary Preschool Program to make all day preschool accessible for four year-olds, regardless of a family's economic background.**

### Childcare

Working parents depend on accessible child care to participate in the workforce and provide income for their families. Effective early care and education is like a four legged stool; it requires affordability, accessibility, quality instruction, and a supported workforce. Yet 24 percent of Iowans live in a child care desert, where there are too few or no providers in their area. The cost of child care is out of reach for many families, yet eligibility to receive child care assistance from the state is one of the lowest in the nation at 145 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). This set of factors occasionally forces parents to decline pay increases or job promotions because the cost of losing their child care assistance dwarfs the pay increases they would otherwise receive.

**As Governor, Fred Hubbell will work with the legislature to raise the childcare eligibility threshold to 180 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and institute a graduated scale to protect parents from having to choose between their career and foregoing childcare services. Fred will work with child care providers and educators to provide training, support, and development opportunities to make the quality of child care in Iowa one of the best in the country.**

### Economic Security

More than one in seven Iowa children live in poverty (\$25,100 for a family of four)<sup>1</sup>, and twice that number live in households struggling to make ends meet.<sup>2</sup> The growing inequality of income and wealth in America is developing into a disparity of opportunity for our kids. Rather than tilt Iowa's tax code toward the wealthiest income earners, we should focus our state's economic and fiscal policies to benefit middle-class and working families. This should include tax policy that recognizes the costs of raising children and the importance of saving for their education.

Despite Iowa's historically low unemployment, wages have not kept up with the cost of living. Iowa's Consumer Price Index shows annual inflation between 2.2 - 2.8 percent (June 2018). Average wage growth is tracking slower than inflation at somewhere between 0.6 – 1.1 percent, which means for most families, the average dollar is not going as far as last year.<sup>3</sup>

Iowa's Department of Revenue also reports that although unemployment is low, job numbers are growing slowly and Iowa's share of national employment continues to decline. That means Iowa is growing slower than other states, or put differently, we are losing population relative to others.

**As Governor, Fred will enact policies that recognize the cost of raising a family and refocus our tax system on working and middle-income Iowans. Fred believes an important first step is to increase the minimum wage, reducing the need for Iowans to utilize the earned income tax credit, while also reducing its cost to taxpayers.**

**Improving quality of life in rural Iowa is critical to growing and retaining our state's population. Fred will direct executive branch agencies and departments to partner with private sector businesses, non-**

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<sup>1</sup> 2018 Federal Poverty Guidelines, <https://familiesusa.org/product/federal-poverty-guidelines>

<sup>2</sup> 2018 Kids Count Report, Annie E. Casey Foundation <http://www.aecf.org/resources/2018-kids-count-data-book/#state-rankings>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/iowa.htm>

**profit agencies, and local developers to improve affordable housing and childcare for families, especially in Iowa's rural communities.**

### Child Welfare & Safety

In 2015, 8,298 Iowa children were found by the state to be victims of abuse, and 5,918 children were in foster care. Child welfare services are intended to prevent or respond to abuse and neglect and provide for the safety, permanency and well-being of children removed from homes. Yet too many children enter and remain in foster care and do not have permanency in their lives. Each year children age out of foster care with major barriers to success, and current investments put much greater emphasis on placement than prevention. Additionally, the recent deaths of Iowa youth adopted from the foster care system and the investigations that followed have raised concerns about the capacity of our child protective services.

“Confirmed cases of child abuse in Iowa spiked from 2016 to 2017, rising by 26 percent from 8,892 in 2016 to 11,236 by the end of 2017.” *Des Moines Register*, 7/19/18

**Fred will restore funding to the Department of Human Services following a series of budget cuts under the Branstad and Reynolds administrations. These cuts have reduced the number of workers responding to child abuse and neglect cases, as well as the supports they can offer to these children. Reduced caseloads are critical to addressing child abuse and neglect and are the first step in providing responses to the immediate safety and security of Iowa's children.**

In 2017, 40 percent of the victims of reported human trafficking cases in Iowa involved minors. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, factors that make children particularly vulnerable to trafficking include a history of abuse, patterns of running away, and an unstable home life or involvement in the child welfare system. Perpetrators often target children, believing their age makes them easier to manipulate and control, and recruit them in schools, parks and other public places, foster care or group homes, and through social media. Yet human trafficking is still a largely hidden problem and requires a heightened awareness to understand the warning signs.

**Fred Hubbell has been endorsed by eight county sheriffs, accounting for more than 1.1 million of Iowa's population. Working with law enforcement, Fred will strongly support an end to human trafficking in Iowa by devoting more resources to the detection and apprehension of traffickers and helping trafficked youth receive the counseling they need to become whole again. Ending human trafficking, however, ultimately requires strong social awareness of the issue, diligent communities watching out for children and youth, and opportunities for all children to be valued and seen.**

**Fred's child and family policies are geared toward strengthening the ability of families and communities to provide safe and supportive environments for children to have opportunities to grow into strong adults.**