

State leaders need to realize the importance of child care

The rug has been pulled out from under families and early care and education providers. The results could be devastating to our economy.

The state had made some great strides in early care and support, and I shared that with Governor Mike Braun at an invite-only meeting in the fall before he was elected. Increasing Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) voucher qualifications from 127% to 150% of the Federal



Jenna Anderson

Poverty Level was a step in the right direction. Even better, increasing CCDF reimbursements from market rates to "cost of care" rates for child care providers was a game changer.

"Are you complimenting something that the state has done?" Braun asked me, somewhat in disbelief.

I assured him I was.

Then I asked, because sometimes things seem

too good to be true, "Does the state have enough funding to continue these changes?"

Both Braun and Rep. Dave Abbott, who was in the room as well, both assured me there was.

Apparently, that was not the case, as we are now learning.

Just days after the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL) announced that Indiana's 2025-27 CCDF plan (which indicated a significant increase CCDF income qualification levels) has been approved by the federal government, the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) dropped a bomb.

Lawmakers didn't set aside enough money to pay for the new rates long-term. Instead, they used temporary Federal COVID-19 relief funds to cover the gap. These funds ran out in September 2024, and the state did not plan ahead to replace them.

Now, Indiana has brought back a waitlist for child care subsidies for the first time since 2018. If nothing is done, 25,000 children could lose their child care. This means parents might have to quit their jobs, even while we know our economy needs more people to enter the workforce.

Our child care providers, already often financially hanging by a thread, will lose increased reimbursements as their families lose vouchers. In many cases, these reimbursement rates are higher than the cost of tuition. That change in 2023, has allowed programs that serve a high number of families with a voucher to finally operate in the black ... something that was rare for many programs prior. As a result, when families lose vouchers, early care providers lose critical funding, and everyone may lose when programs begin to close.

This isn't short-term, either. The state will not re-evaluate the situation until October 2025.

State leaders still have a chance to make this right. Indiana families, child care providers, and businesses need to work together to solve this. Lawmakers must set aside \$140 million each year for the next two years to fully fund child care subsidies at the levels they set last year.

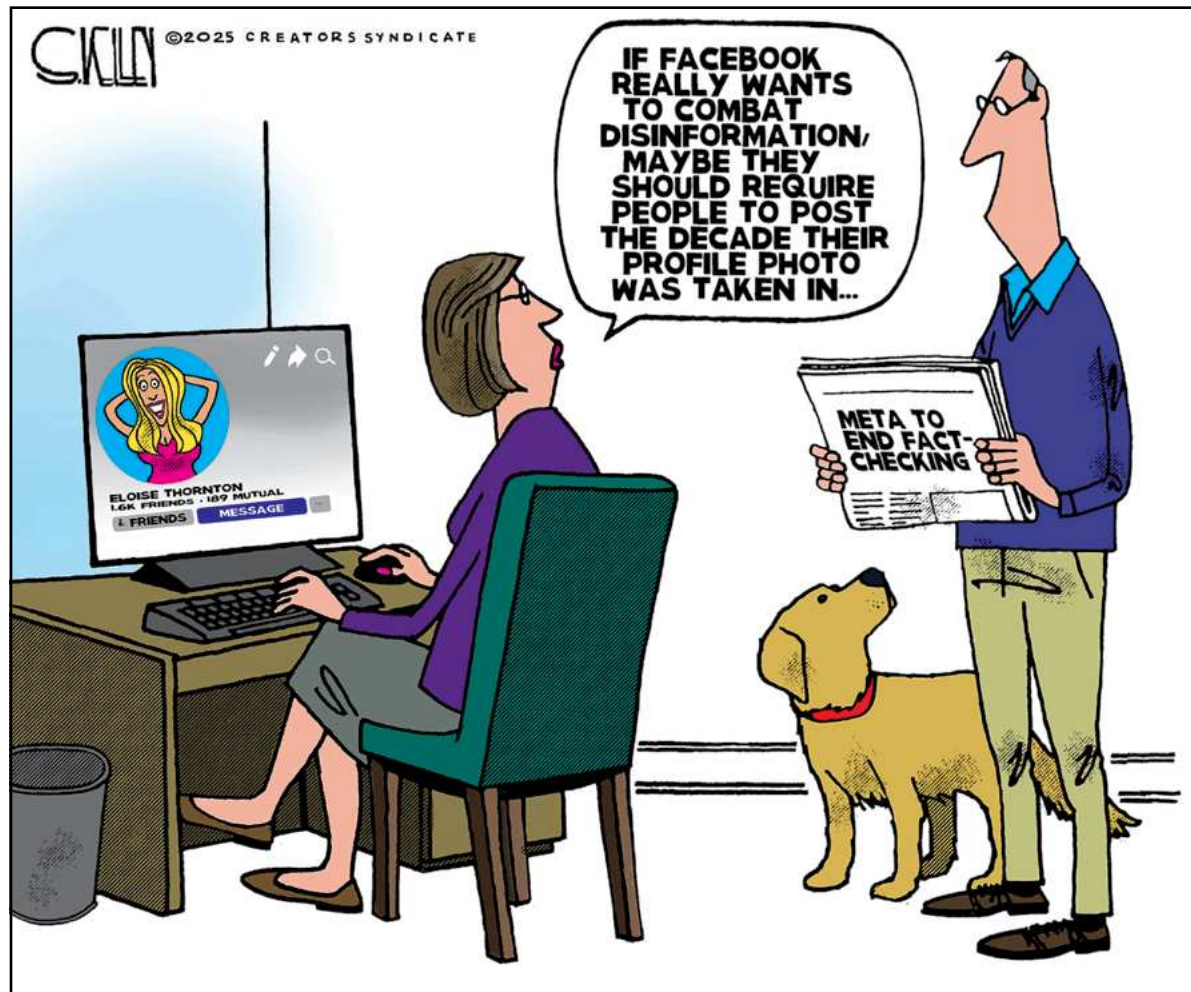
Advocacy by those in early childhood is critical this session. The director of OECOSL left office on Friday, Jan. 10 amid the change in state leadership, and has not yet been replaced. We don't have a trusted voice in that position, so we need to be that voice.

Investing in child care helps everyone. It keeps kids safe and learning while their parents work. It also helps businesses avoid turnover, which includes hiring and training new workers, because parents already in the workforce can keep their jobs. Perhaps most importantly, quality early care and education provides a strong start for children as their brains develop. This foundation sets them up for lifelong learning, good health, and success.

State leaders are deciding the budget right now. Let's make sure they know how important child care is. Contact your state legislators today and ask them to fully fund child care subsidies. If you're not sure who your legislators are, go to think link and type in your address: <https://iga.in.gov/information/find-legislators>.

Let's do what's right for Indiana families, children, and the economy.

JENNA ANDERSON is the coordinator for Thrive By Five childcare coalition in LaGrange and Noble counties.



Letter Policy

We welcome letters to the editor. All letters must be submitted with the author's name, address and telephone number.

We reserve the right to reject or edit letters on the basis of libel, poor taste or repetition.

Submit letters online at kpcnews.com/site/forms/online_services/letter

Read letters online at kpcnews.com/opinions/letters

Currently, our offices are open Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The News Sun
102 N. Main St.
P.O. Box 39
Kendallville, IN 46755

Email: cernsberger@kpcmedia.com

The Star
118 W. 9th St.
Auburn, IN 46706

Email: jjones@kpcmedia.com

The Herald Republican
107 N. Martha St.
Angola, IN 46703

Email: mmarturello@kpcmedia.com

Letter to the Editor

Reasons to say goodbye to Biden

Goodbye to Joe Biden, and good riddance.

I hope the Democrat party is relegated to a permanent, minority position, too.

Democrat leadership cannot be trusted with power by a rational populace.

First, Democrat leadership conspires with leftist, Neo-Marxist ideologues to terrorize the nation.

The most violent and enduring riots in 2020 were supported by Democrat leadership. Rioter chants, demands and graffiti reflected the Democrat platform. Leftist congressmen echoed their demands.

Democrat leadership has a cozy relationship with leftist activists. Activists are the militant arm of the party.

This alliance was demonstrated at the recent presentation of George Soros with the Presidential Freedom Medal. Soros funds campaigns of prosecutors and district attorneys who refuse to prosecute many criminals based on social justice aka wokeness activism.

Second, Democrat leadership makes radical decisions with little regard for the welfare of common Americans.

Biden disrupted the lives of energy workers through the Keystone pipeline decision. Consumers experienced higher energy costs and inflation as a result.

Let them eat cake, screams the Democrat elite.

Third, Democrat leadership is incapable of sound reasoning needed for important economic decisions. Their ideology handicaps their ability to conduct objective cost/benefit analyses.

Take fossil fuels for example. Fossil fuels are good. Fossil fuels are plentiful.

Fossil fuels allow men to flourish in

harsh environments. Fossil fuels power air conditioners, furnaces, computers, and medical equipment that save countless lives.

Solar and wind solutions are not realistic. Neither are dependable. Neither are capable of meeting our needs. Nuclear power is dependable and could meet our needs, but the left finds it unacceptable.

Democrat leadership would bankrupt our nation pursuing their impractical solutions to appease ideologues.

Fourth, Democrat leadership uses deception to gain control and to hide the failures of their policies.

Crime is a good example.

Progressive policies that coddle criminals as victims of oppression and bail reform that releases dangerous repeat offenders have caused a radical increase in crime.

Biden's administration and media allies claim that crime is down.

Crime is up since the Trump administration, and the public knows it. The increase may have leveled off somewhat, but it is still elevated from 2019 levels.

Fifth, Democrat leadership is willing to jeopardize personal and national safety to further their agenda.

Biden allowed millions of inadequately vetted immigrants to enter the nation under the false pretense of asylum. Some are violent criminals and others are potential terrorists.

Sixth, Democrat leadership has shown itself willing to violate fundamental constitutional rights to silence those who challenge their agenda. This includes censoring and/or prosecuting conservatives like pro-life activists and parents at school board meetings.

Seventh, Democrat leadership has weaponized the federal agencies against their

political enemies and turns a blind eye to activists who attack political opponents.

A good example is the allowance of protests outside homes of Supreme Court justices in an effort to change their mind about the leaked impending Dobbs decision. This is illegal per 18 U.S. Code 1507 and constitutes an implicit threat to affect the outcome of a judicial matter.

Eighth, Democrat leadership has a worldview and agenda that is fundamentally evil and disruptive.

The party has supported abortion since 1973. Abortion has claimed the lives of 65 million preborns.

Democrat leadership wants to ban pregnancy centers that help women throughout pregnancy and thereafter.

They support gender ideology leading to the sterilization and mutilation of confused children.

Democrat leadership has engaged in indoctrination of Christian and conservative children into wokeness and gender ideology through the public (government) school system.

Ninth, Democrat leadership undermines Republican presidencies through the bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy is predominantly staffed with Democrats. Bureaucrats are supposed to support the president despite personal political affiliation. Under a Republican president, though, the bureaucracy conducts an overt effort to undermine his objectives.

I hope subversive individuals within the bureaucracy are fired. I will not shed one tear on their account.

For a detailed version of this letter, see my blog at christiannewsjunkie.com.

Robert Sparkman
Rome City

The angels within ourselves will provide help

The views from my windows are of great beauty. I think January is my favorite month.

Of course, that will probably change when we turn the calendar to February, but for now the cold and snow give us pause in our day. Breathing in the cold, crisp winter air is a joy that not everyone can experience!

We are the fortunate ones. This winter is a bit different from last year! Last year ice fishing and ice skating on local lakes and ponds lasted for about two days. This week the lakes are dotted with fisherman on buckets or in shanties. I love driving by to see this fairy land at dusk as their lights gleam like winter fireflies.

And yet, so many are not so fortunate. I follow the fires in California, just as you do. I weep over the stories and cheer on the heroes ... the firefighters who are coming from all over the world to lend a hand. I cannot imagine in any way working 16 hours and day in the heat and the stress, sleeping for a few hours and then willingly go back to the job. I have traveled

to California quite a few times. Sometimes by plane, but often by train. Several times I have taken the coastal train high up on the bluffs of the highway on the edge of the Pacific Ocean.

I have looked for the green flash more than once, but with no luck.

I personally know the grief of losing all that we once had or knew. When Jonah was a baby, Aaron was living in the farmhouse. One dark night in November it burned to the ground.

I was on Ocracoke at the time and made the journey back home as did my sons. We walked through the rubble in old boots watching where we stepped in disbelief that our house was gone. We built that house as a family. The fire destroyed all but our stories and memories.

Yet, while walking through the rubble, we came across a cardboard box which was somewhat intact. That was so strange as everything was gone. I opened the charred box to find three copies of "Oh, the Places You'll Go," by Dr. Seuss. I had purchased one for each of

my sons for their high school graduation. I wrote to each one of them in the front of the book. My handwriting was still legible. I stood there in the embers as I read to them. Of course, I cried.

Once the news was out, my front porch, my garage and my living room were full of donations. It was a complete and generous outpouring of love in this town.

Now we are faced with helping out. There are many organizations through which to give money. Please research the ones you feel are best for you. There is always the Red Cross. Does it matter that we do not know the folks? Of course, it doesn't. We are generous. We are kind. We take care of one another. Dipping into our coffers will help those in need and fill our own hearts with love and kindness. And please, let's not forget our friends in need from the October hurricane. There is still so much needed in the Appalachia area. Your support is needed and welcomed there.

There are always needs at home as well. You know my friend, Jacob, from my writings. He has been my right-hand man with Mary Shelley, Poe Night, Trine University Theatre and a

wonderful friend. While I was gone, his family home burned to the ground. His parents and their pets made it to safety, but the house did not survive. They also are in need and a good place to help locally. By the way, my front porch has become the donation center for goods and for cash, should you want to help.

Over the past weekend, Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman wrote a poem entitled, "Smoldering Dawn." She wrote this as a fundraiser for the California Fire Foundation. The last line goes like this, "To find the angels, all we need to do is look within ourselves."

We are the angels. We are called upon to be kind. To be givers. To be there for others. Why else are we here?

So, my friends, give what you can to whomever you can. And if your only gift during this time is a prayer in the holy darkness, then you, too, are the angel.

LOU ANN HOMAN-SAYLOR lives in Angola at the White Picket Gardens. She is a storyteller, teacher, writer, actress and a collector of front porch stories. She can be contacted at loketof@time@aol.com.