

Child Care is Power & the Foundation of Economic Power and Well-Being

The experiences of women in San Mateo County not only tell the story of caregiving challenges, but also the opportunities to increase the financial security and well-being of women through more equitable infrastructure, investment, mindsets and power structures.

MEGAN FROM HALF MOON BAY MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

"I am a 34-year-old teacher married to a 37-year-old teacher. Combined, we are low-to-middle class income. We were able to purchase a condo thanks to a dip in the market at the start of the Pandemic and a low-income first-time homebuyer program. We both carry student-loan debt as well. Our families live hundreds of miles away in LA/SD. **We postponed having children because our income could not support a mortgage and childcare.** Once my son was born, I spent weeks trying to find daycare so that I could go back to work as we depend on both incomes. I must have contacted 10-12 facilities. They didn't even have room on the waitlist. We drive 10 miles beyond our work to daycare now. **We are holding off having a second child until our first is in TK because we cannot afford the cost of two children in childcare.** SF has paid-leave guaranteed for both mother and father. Our county should provide this as well. **We need to prioritize opening new childcare facilities. Potential child-tax credits for childcare would help as well.**"



Child care educator shortage: 2,829
Shortage of child care spaces: 17,157



JANET FROM SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT, SINGLE PARENT & EDUCATOR

"I am an immigrant, single mother of two young children, a 7-year-old boy and a two-year-old girl. When my daughter was only two weeks old, her father went to prison and I was left alone with them. I have no other family, so I started to navigate the support system and I began to study and educate myself. I didn't have money to pay for private care, so I had to wait. Today, two years later, my children have child care, I am a parent leader at Parent Voices, I finished my GED and am a certified doula and caregiver. **I can work because my children receive child care.** Applications for child care take too long. There should be an emergency plan for people who need to return to work because their income depends on it. Also the recertification processes are too exhaustive. It should be simplified. **I would like there to be more emergency support for people who are victims of domestic violence and their children, and for there to be more people providing mental health care for women and children in the county.**"

Single mothers are often both the primary earner and caregiver in their households, making child care access a necessity for these mothers to remain employed.



DAWN FROM MONTARA PARENT & CONSULTANT

"I left my previous job following pregnancy discrimination and could not risk giving up our childcare spots as I tried to find another job. We have two children in childcare, which costs approximately \$5k per month, and one income. We scraped by for the year until I was able to find something, but **there were a few times that I almost decided to not re-enter the workforce due to the cost. It's incredible to me that childcare tuition is more than our mortgage.** Unfortunately, there are not enough options that offer care for infants on the Coast. On top of that, **service hours usually make it really difficult for parents who work far from home and arrangements for pick up and drop off have to be made.** I believe I'm one of the lucky ones when it comes to childcare and it's still difficult for me."

Employment Rate for Single Mothers:

- 84% with child care
- 67% without child care

ANA FROM SAN MATEO SINGLE PARENT WORKING FOR NONPROFIT

"I am a single parent with a four-year-old child. I work in the nonprofit sector where I make too much to qualify for publicly subsidized resources like housing and childcare, yet I live paycheck-to-paycheck. I have no family in the area, so I rely on paid childcare when I work or other situations requiring childcare arise. I was lucky to find relatively "cheap" childcare for \$1600 a month. At the end of the month, I've usually just barely paid our bills. **After rent, childcare is the highest item in my budget.** I provide 100% of caregiving outside of work hours with no financial support from my child's father. My day starts at 6am and goes full speed until 10pm, seven days a week. **Single working parents - particularly women - face layers of burden.** The financial, emotional, and physical labor of childrearing falls on us. Child raising in isolation has had extremely adverse impacts on my mental health. We need programs that result in lower-cost programs for more families. This means more tax dollars for childcare, yes, but it also means normalizing the act of co-parenting across families, sharing resources in the community."



Over the past two decades, the cost of child care has more than doubled, while wages have remained mostly stagnant.



ROSALI FROM MENLO PARK IMMIGRANT, CAREGIVER & GRAD STUDENT

"I am a San Mateo County library worker, and a graduate student. **I take care of my husband, who has lupus nephritis (stage 3 kidney disease).** His condition affects his blood pressure as well as his mental health. I am also a first-generation immigrant in the United States and do not have family members here. I am the only person who takes care of my husband. After COVID-19, his kidney disease progressed to level 3. Since then, I haven't been able to work full-time. So I work part-time for the county because I want to make sure he is well taken care of. This affects my financial stability because I live on a monthly paycheck and do not have any savings. Also, this affects my mental health because I worry about the future and about him needing a kidney transplant. **Full health insurance for permanent part-time employees would be a dream** because it will allow me to cover my husband under my insurance. The county is a great place to work, but health insurance for permanent part-time employees is very expensive (about 400 dollars or so). My husband is currently under a Medical plan, but I would like him to have better healthcare due to his special circumstance. Expanding CalFresh for county employees would be a great help as well. I applied a couple of times, but didn't qualify because they looked at my gross pay. The real amount is much less (25% less) due to retirement. Lastly, opening **more remote or hybrid jobs would be a great help for some of us who want to work more, but can't due to lack of help with caregiving services.**"

"There are only four kinds of people in the world. Those who have been caregivers. Those who are currently caregivers. Those who will be caregivers, and those who will need a caregiver."

- Rosalynn Carter