

Editorial: Let's brand Fargo-Moorhead as a family friendly workforce haven

By [Forum Editorial](#) on Jun 10, 2018 at 10:30 a.m.

Fargo-Moorhead is engaged in a constant competition with other cities to attract a skilled and talented workforce. The metro cities for years have consciously worked to provide amenities to improve quality of life to make the area more welcoming for young people. But other challenges remain. One of the biggest: affordable day care for young families. The issue recently came to the fore at a Chamber of Commerce event, when nonprofit and business leaders gathered to talk about the dire need for affordable, high-quality child care. Nonprofit leaders urged the community to invest in child care, pointing out that families are making decisions about where to work and raise children with child care in mind. We agree that the issue is a top priority—what could be more important than our children?—and throw down a challenge to business, political and civic leaders: Let's work together to brand Fargo-Moorhead as a place that is friendly to workers and their families.

Businesses and other employers, in their own self-interest, should be highly engaged in this effort. After all, the metro area has been grappling with a chronic workforce shortage for years. As a local priority, it ranks alongside flood protection, an endeavor that state, local and federal taxpayers are prepared to invest \$2.4 billion to address. As with flood control, a real solution to providing access to child care that is both affordable and of high quality will require a collective solution. And a real solution will cost money. Part of the continuing public dialogue on this important issue should center on how businesses and other employers, as well as other stakeholders, can chip in to provide subsidies to make child care affordable to working families.

This challenge is multidimensional. Good child care is difficult to provide and requires specialized expertise. Providers must be licensed and meet standards. Even though child care is expensive—prohibitively expensive for many working families—child care workers are not well paid. As a society, we give lip service to families, but often fall short in providing the support needed to help families succeed. Frankly, we undoubtedly would make family support a much higher public priority if we had more women serving in elected office. Some states are adopting pre-kindergarten school programs both to give young children an earlier start in lifelong learning, but also to alleviate the child care problems so many families face.

This is both a challenge and an opportunity. It's obviously an issue that's bigger than Fargo-Moorhead, with supporting roles for holistic solutions to workforce development to be provided by officials in Bismarck and St. Paul. Individually, most businesses can't afford to provide child care for their employees. But by putting many heads together and working collectively we can come up with a real solution. We can put the Fargo-Moorhead area on the map as a place that truly welcomes, and fosters, working families. That would be a real beacon

to people searching for a good place to work and raise their families. And it would put a real dent in the chronic worker shortage.

Let's make Fargo-Moorhead one of the best places to live for families.

Editorials represent the views of Forum management and the Editorial Board.