Kids and Campaigning: The Impact of Child Care as an Approved Campaign Expense on Women's Legislative Candidacy

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KIDS AND CAMPAIGNING: THE IMPACT OF CHILD CARE AS AN APPROVED CAMPAIGN EXPENSE ON WOMEN’S LEGISLATIVE CANDIDACY

by

Matilyn Kay Mortensen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Political Science

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Logan, Utah

2022
ABSTRACT

Kids and Campaigning: The Impact of Child Care as an Approved Campaign Expense on Women’s Legislative Candidacy

by

Matilyn Kay Mortensen, Master of Science
Utah State University, 2022

Major Professor: Dr. Damon Cann
Department: Political Science

While women’s candidacy continues to reach record numbers in the United States, women remain grossly underrepresented as candidates and elected officials at all levels of government. Many people and groups are focused on increasing women’s political involvement and often these efforts focus on empowering individual women to become candidates. However, when women do run for office, there are many systemic challenges they face, such as the fact that whether or not women work professionally or for compensation, they perform more unpaid care work than their men counterparts.

In the past few years, multiple states across the nation have begun allowing candidates regardless of gender to use campaign funds to pay for child care, which in theory, could increase the number of women running for state legislatures. Through a quantitative analysis of elections between 2010 and 2020, this paper finds that in states where this policy exists there is not an immediate effect on the rate of women running for lower chamber legislative seats. This paper also includes a qualitative component featuring interviews with six women serving in the Utah House of Representatives. These
interviews provide insight into how this policy can support individual lawmakers, even if it were to not have a long-term impact on increasing the overall rates of women running for office.

(33 pages)
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In the past few years, multiple states across the nation have begun allowing candidates regardless of gender to use campaign funds to pay for child care, which in theory, could increase the number of women running for state legislatures. Through an analysis of elections between 2010 and 2020, this paper finds that in states where this policy exists there is not an immediate effect on the rate of women running for lower chamber legislative seats. This paper also includes interviews with six women serving in the Utah House of Representatives. These interviews provide insight into how this policy can support individual lawmakers, even if it were to not have a long-term impact on increasing the overall rates of women running for office.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee for their expertise and guidance. A special thanks to my family — especially my dad — who always support me in my dreams and ambitions.

Matilyn Kay Mortensen
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List Of Tables</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List Of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: Literature Review and Theory</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Individual Intervention to Systemic Challenges</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Double Binds of Care Work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Women’s Candidacy Through Child Care Support</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: Data and Methods</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Methods</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Results</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Methods</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Results</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: Conclusion</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 OLS Model of Women Candidacies ................................................................. 12
Table 2 Overview of Lawmakers Interviewed ............................................................. 15
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. A graphic illustrating the gender make-up of all United States legislatures in 2021. (“Women in State Legislatures for 2021” 2021). ......................................................1

Figure 2. A graphic illustrating which states allow candidates to use campaign funds to pay for child care, as of the 2020 election. ..........................................................19
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Women are grossly underrepresented in elected office in the United States. Though a record number of women are serving in the 117th U.S. Congress, these women make up just over a quarter of this national legislative branch (Blazina and Desilver 2021). The composition of state legislatures is similar. As of 2021, 30.6% of state legislative seats in the United States were held by women. Nevada is the only legislature in the nation where women are in the majority — 61.8% of the state’s lawmakers are women as of 2021. The state with the next highest number of women serving is Rhode Island with 45.1% of seats being filled by women (“Women in State Legislatures for 2021” 2021). In Utah, the trend is below the national average. Only 27 of the state’s 104 lawmakers (nearly 26%) were women as of the 2022 legislative session.

Figure 1: A graphic illustrating the gender make-up of all United States legislatures in 2021. (‘Women in State Legislatures for 2021’ 2021).
As women make up half of the population, it's natural to ask why they hold such a low proportion of elected positions in the country. One possible explanation for this underrepresentation is the disproportionate share of care duties that women shoulder in the United States. While women are underrepresented in politics, they are overrepresented when it comes to the amount of care work they perform, whether or not they are formally employed (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Crittenden 2002; Hewlett 2007; Hochschild and Machung 2012; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2010; Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth 2018; Thomas 2002; Williams 2001). Women provide 75% of unpaid care work globally (Dhar 2020) and in the United States, they do almost twice as much care work and domestic work as the men who are their partners do (Bianchi et al. 2012). This burden that women carry is one of the systemic challenges they face when they decide to run for office, which is why attempts to close the political gender gap by encouraging women to “lean in" are not enough. While encouragement can increase the candidate pool, it does not reduce the systemic challenges that candidates face when they decide to run (Piscopo 2018).

One policy that has the potential to address a systemic challenge that women seeking office face is allowing candidates to use campaign funds to pay for child care. In 1993, Minnesota became the first state to codify this practice and 26 years later in 2019, Utah became the second state to do so (Vote Mama Foundation 2021). In the years since, 13 states have followed. Other states have issued advisory opinions or ethics committee rulings allowing candidates to spend campaign funds on child care. As of October 2021, 25 states allow or have allowed for candidates regardless of gender to use campaign funds to pay for child care expenses related to running for office ("State Candidates and
the Use of Campaign Funds for Child Care Expenses” 2021), and in 2018 and 2019, the Federal Elections Commission, whose rulings only apply to candidates running for federal office, ruled in favor of two women running for congressional office who wanted to use campaign funds to pay for child care expenses (Pinsker 2019). The Vote Mama Foundation, an organization dedicated to increasing the political impact of mothers across the United States, is working to ensure laws are passed so candidates in all states can use child care to pay for campaign expenses by 2023.

Most states that allow campaign dollars to pay for child care began doing so in the past few years as the number of women serving as state legislators in the United States began increasing more significantly (Smith 2021). While it is difficult to separate which came first, rising numbers of women candidates or legislation allowing campaign money to pay for child care, this paper theorizes that in states where this expense is allowed, more women may run for lower-chamber legislative seats. The quantitative analysis in this paper finds that there is no immediate effect of these policies on women’s lower-chamber legislative candidacy. Because these policies are so new, it is possible that there may be a longer-term effect on women’s candidacy in the future. Whether or not this policy creates a measurable long-term effect, it does have the potential to provide significant support to individual lawmakers. The quantitative analysis in this paper is followed up by a qualitative component featuring interviews with six of the women in Utah’s legislature about how the ability to use campaign funds to pay for child care impacts their candidacy and legislative service. Whether or not this policy ever directly contributes to an increase in women candidates, its benefit to individual candidates is still noteworthy.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

The political gender gap has been studied extensively and many reasons for why the representation of women lags have been explored from women being less likely to run for office than their men counterparts, to sexism in voting and difficulties women face in fundraising. Initial research on women’s lack of candidacy in the 1970s attributed the political exclusion of women to overt bias and discrimination against women candidates. In the decades since, research examining election data and controlling for party and incumbency shows candidates of both genders winning at similar rates, though further investigation shows that the women candidates who win are more qualified than their men counterparts. This leads to a shift in looking at structural barriers, such as fewer women working in typical political “pipeline” careers and women being less likely to enjoy the incumbency advantage that men do (Lawless and Pearson 2008).

From Individual Intervention to Systemic Challenges

Research frameworks that focus on why women as individuals don’t choose to run and aren’t in office at the same rates as men assume that men are in office because of their own merit. This approach fails to acknowledge the real societal issues women face in deciding to run for office and fails to take into account the fact that less-qualified men benefit from a wide, shallow pool of candidates in a way women do not (Piscopo 2018). Earlier scholarship focused on how the public lives of women are shaped by their domestic responsibilities, which can impose high costs on their political participation. More recently, scholarship has focused on an “ambition gap” between men and women running for office (Bernhard, Shames, Teele 2021). However, suggesting the lack of
women candidates and lawmakers can be fixed by asking women to “lean in” is an oversimplification. Women who run for office face an uneven playing field shaped by systemic factors such as who donors give money to and gendered media coverage. Research on encouraging and training women to step up focuses on individual-level intervention and centers the issue of a lack of women’s representation on women as individuals, rather than a system that oppresses women. Empowering individual women may increase the candidate pool, but those women still face the same systemic challenges. Successfully increasing the number of women candidates and subsequently, the number of women elected officials requires addressing systemic challenges in an effort to even the playing field (Piscopo 2018). Bernhard, Shames, and Teele write in their 2021 paper “To Emerge? Breadwinning, Motherhood, and Women’s Decisions to Run for Office” that

“For well-resourced, ambitious women, turning on the pipeline’s tap through recruitment and encouragement may be enough to tip the balance in favor of candidacy. But for many others with nascent ambition, household demands may constrain their ability to express their ambition through candidacy.”

The Double Binds of Care Work

When it comes to the systemic barriers that women face, research shows that the amount of care work they perform and the double binds that accompany parenthood for women create significant challenges (Bernhard, Shames, Teele 2021, Teele, Kalla, Rosenbluth 2018). Research shows that regardless of gender, voters prefer candidates with children in more traditional family situations, but that women with children are less likely to run for office. This means that single and childless women who are more available to run for office are not the candidates that political elites and voters favor
(Teele, Kalla, Rosenbluth 2018). Based on the substantial research that shows whether or not women are the breadwinners in their household, they still perform more housework than their men counterparts (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Crittenden 2002; Hewlett 2007; Hochschild and Machung 2012; Iverson and Rosenbluth 2010; Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth 2018; Thomas 2002; Williams 2001) and that the burdens of this “second shift” of household and care work are felt even more acutely by women of color (Holman and Schneider 2018; Stokes-Brown and Dolan 2010), it makes sense that women with more children and more financial responsibility would opt out of running. In the 2021 research by Bernhard, Shames, and Teele, the research team found that “women who were breadwinners, or who expressed fear that they would lose income as a result of running for office, were much less likely to convert their nascent ambition to expressed ambition than women with less financial responsibility.”

Depending on the measure used, a 13-16 percentage point gap was associated with bread-winning and expressive ambition (Bernhard, Shames and Teele).

**Supporting Women’s Candidacy Through Child Care Assistance**

Because care work and financial responsibility are shown to have a negative effect on women’s expressive ambition, providing women candidates child care support could have a positive impact on the political involvement of women. This policy has the benefit of providing support to individual candidates as they need it while addressing systemic issues that women face. As these policies are relatively new there is little to no quantitative scholarly research on their specific impact, but there is anecdotal evidence that they are making candidacy attainable for more women. In 2019 after the second FEC ruling in favor of a woman running for office using her campaign funds to pay for child
care, Liuba Grechen Shirley told The Atlantic (Pinsker 2019) that she would have been unable to continue her congressional campaign if she had not received a similar ruling the year before. Since her candidacy, Grechen Shirley founded Vote Mama and in 2021, her organization released a report examining the use of campaign funds to pay for child care in state and local elections. The report provides an overview of the history of the use of campaign funds for child care expenses and is informed by interviews with current and former lawmakers. It provides information on how parents are using this policy to run campaigns across the nation and finds that “the ability to use campaign funds for child care is vital for accessibility and equality. (Vote Mama Foundation 2021)”

This analysis leads to a basic hypothesis: In states where candidates are allowed to use campaign funds to pay for child care, more women will run for lower-chamber legislative seats in these states. Allowing candidates to use the campaign funds they raise to pay for child care can reduce a financial burden for women and communicate that a state values the participation of parents in their legislative body, which based on what research shows about the barriers women face to running for office, could reduce burdens for women candidates. I am examining these state-level offices because there are more potential openings candidates can run for on the state level than at the federal level, and because candidates on the local level are likely to raise fewer funds for their campaign meaning even though child care is an approved campaign expense, local candidates may not have the money to take advantage of the option.
Quantitative Methods

The data for the quantitative portion of this research is drawn from the 2010-2020 elections with state-year as the unit of analysis. The independent variable is whether or not child care is an approved campaign expense and the dependent variable is the percentage of seats up for election in a given election year with at least one woman from a major party running for that seat. I used data from the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics to determine the percentage of open seats in each election year with at least one woman running for that seat. The benefit of this measure is it looks at the number of opportunities voters had to select a woman candidate. Although any increase in the number of women running for office can help with improving women’s representation, increasing the overall representation of women in legislative bodies requires voters in more districts to have the opportunity to select women candidates.

I limited my research to lower-chamber state legislative bodies because, in most states, term lengths vary between the upper and lower chambers, which creates issues in trying to combine the bodies to look at legislatures as a whole. I selected the lower-chamber bodies because on average, House members in state legislatures tend to be slightly younger than state Senators (Kurtz 2015) and because lower-chamber seats are generally seen as an entry point for first-time state candidates. Because of this, it seems child care is more likely to be a concern for lower-chamber lawmakers than it would be for upper-chamber lawmakers. There are also more seats in state Houses than in state Senates, providing more data points to analyze for this research.
My data compares elections in 45 of the 50 states. I eliminated Arizona, Nebraska, New Jersey, South Dakota, and West Virginia from this research paper because of differences in their legislative elections. In Arizona, New Jersey, South Dakota, and West Virginia the lower chamber legislative bodies have multi-member districts with elections that are structured in a way that is difficult to compare with the elections in the other 45 states. Nebraska has a unicameral legislative body, which means the state did not have a lower chamber legislative body to compare with the other states in my research. My research analyzes election years from 2010 to 2020. In most states, this eleven-year period included six elections, however, some states had fewer elections due to term lengths or holding elections in odd years rather than even-numbered years as happened in the majority of state elections I analyzed.

The key-independent variable for this analysis is whether or not child care was an approved campaign expense in a given election year. My theory is that in states where candidates are allowed to use their campaign funds to pay for child care, women will be more likely to run for lower chamber legislative seats because they will have an additional avenue of support to help them meet their child care needs. This legislation may also communicate that parents are valued lawmakers. The hypothesis is that the additional support this policy can provide for women who want to run for office may increase the number of women running for lower-chamber legislative seats. To determine which states allowed candidates to use campaign expenses to pay for child care and when those policies went into effect, I used a data sheet compiled by the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics (“State Candidates and the Use of Campaign Funds for Child Care Expenses” 2021). The Rutgers data I used was updated in October 2021, and
since the election years I examined fell between 2010 and 2020, this provided me with enough information for this research paper. As of October of 2021, 25 states currently allow or have allowed candidates to use campaign funds to pay for child care. In some of these states, this practice is enshrined into law, while in others candidates were allowed to use campaign money to pay for child care through an advisory opinion. Future candidates would have to seek individual approval to use campaign funds for their child care needs.

Figure 2: A graphic illustrating which states allow candidates to use campaign funds to pay for child care, as of the 2020 election.
In analyzing my data, I differentiated states where case-by-case approval was needed from states where child care is explicitly approved as an expense for all candidates. The reason I chose to do this is that while allowing candidates to pay for child care with their campaign funds through an advisory opinion provides more flexibility than not allowing candidates this resource, if the practice is not enshrined into law it requires candidates who want to use funds to pay for child care costs to jump through additional hoops. Despite the fact that hoops exist, more women may run because of the flexibility, however, the hoops may prevent people from benefiting from this policy. Because of this nuance, it felt important in understanding the impacts of this policy to separate states where the policy exists as an advisory opinion from the states where the policy is enshrined into law.

In addition to this key variable, I control for partisanship by using the percentage of votes in the state that went towards the Democratic presidential candidate in the election that preceded the year I was collecting data for. This is important to note because while women’s representation is increasing throughout the United States, it is not increasing equally across the two major political parties. In 2015 when women comprised nearly 25% of state legislatures overall, they made up 34% of Democratic lawmakers compared to 17% of Republican lawmakers (Kurtz 2015). In 2022, there are 1,736 women serving in lower-chamber legislative seats across the nation, holding nearly a third of the total number of lower-chamber seats. Two-thirds of these women officeholders are Democrats (“Women in State Legislatures 2022”, n.d.). Because of these significant differences between the number of women elected officials in the Democratic and Republican parties, the partisan make-up of a state could be one factor
influencing the number of women candidates running in that state. This variable needs to be controlled for in order to more accurately determine whether or not child care as an approved campaign expense is playing a role in increasing the number of women candidates.

Finally, there are natural differences that vary from one state to the next. The same is true that one year can vary from another, with a general trend of more women running for office over the time period studied in this thesis. The easiest way to control for these unit and time-specific effects is to include fixed effects for states and years, which is the approach I apply here.

**Quantitative Results**

To examine whether or not more women run for lower-chamber legislative seats in states where child care is an approved campaign expense, I ran a linear regression model to compare the ratios of women running as major party lower-chamber candidates over time. Results appear in Table 1 below; fixed effects are not displayed in the table.

**Table 1: OLS Model of Women Candidacies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>St. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(intercept)</td>
<td>0.353</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowed</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advisory</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democratic</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A quick evaluation of Table 1 shows that none of the variables reach conventional thresholds for statistical significance. Specifically, the allowance of child care costs as a campaign expense, whether allowed explicitly or implied through advisory opinions, has no statistically significant effect on rates of women's candidacies. Moreover, the results also show no statistically significant effect of state partisanship as well.

The results from this quantitative analysis seem to clearly show that policies allowing candidates to pay for child care with campaign funds do not have an immediate impact on the number of women running for lower-chamber state legislative seats. Because these policies are so new, it is possible that a relationship could emerge in the future. Almost all the states that allow candidates to use their campaign funds to pay for child care began doing so in 2018. Because of this, there is essentially one election year, 2020, where the effects of this policy can be observed. As a result, one should take caution in interpreting the results as evidence of the policy’s ineffectiveness. Continued research is needed to fully understand the policy’s impact.

**Qualitative Methods**

The qualitative portion of this paper used semi-structured interviews to explore the impacts these policies may have on individual women lawmakers. In selecting lawmakers to recruit for my research, I limited my interviews to women currently serving in the Utah House of Representatives because this matched the scope of my research to
examine whether these policies are having an immediate effect on women’s lower-chamber candidacy.

In addition to this recruitment criteria, I considered whether or not the lawmaker had children under the age of 18. I specifically reached out to women who I knew to have minor children, or to women who, based on their age, it seemed possible they may have minor children or might be considering whether or not to become a parent. I also reached out to some women who had been serving in the legislature in 2019 when the law was passed to learn more about how the bill was received and what was considered in its passing. In determining who I reached out to, I made sure to recruit both Democrats and Republicans. I recruited my interviewees through email and text message. Email was the primary recruitment method and I used text messages as an alternative follow-up method.

Because these interviews were semi-structured, the exact questions I asked and how I asked the questions varied from interview to interview. However, the general topics I explored with each lawmaker were the same. Specifically, I asked my interviewees:

- Whether or not this policy had been in effect when they ran for office
- Whether or not they had used the policy, and
- Whether the policy had impacted their legislative service.

For women who had run for office after it had passed, I asked if they had known about this policy and if it had impacted their decision to run. For women who had served in the legislature when this bill was passed, I asked them about the discussion that had surrounded the bill and how they had felt about the policy proposal.

In analyzing my transcripts, I looked for quotes that provided insight into how
these policies impact individual women in order to have anecdotal stories that may provide insight into this policy that the quantitative analysis of data could not.

Table 2: Overview of Lawmakers Interviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lawmaker</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Has minor children?</th>
<th>Ran for office after the legislation was passed?</th>
<th>Has used the campaign funds to pay for child care?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Results

While there is no evidence that this policy increases women’s candidacies, it may well be that such policies still make it easier for women who already intend to run to pursue that goal. This, in itself, is a normatively desirable end. To determine whether such policies do, in fact, make it easier for women who are already going to run to do so, I interviewed six women (three Democrats and three Republicans) currently serving in Utah’s House of Representatives. During my interviews, multiple women noted that because the 2020 election took place during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, many of their campaigns looked very different than they had in previous years. Because of this, they may have spent more time campaigning remotely or had more flexibility in
their schedule due to either personally working from home, or having a partner or family members who were working from home or unemployed. This meant that some women who may have used the policy in a more typical election year did not.

Three of the women I interviewed joined the legislature after this policy became law. Of these women, one did not have young children who she would need to pay for child care for, one did not know about this policy until partway through her campaign, and one said that while she knew about the policy before she ran and is using it, she would have still run had it not been law. For this third lawmaker, despite the fact that she said she would have still run for office if it was not law, she is currently using the policy and said it is a significant campaign cost for her that “as a legislator, (makes her) job possible” and makes it “more feasible (for her) to continue serving.”

The women interviewed all said they believed this policy was flexible enough to be accommodating of a variety of child care needs. It allows candidates to choose the form of child care they feel the most comfortable with, whether it is a nanny who provides care within their home or a child care provider like a daycare. The policy in Utah also allows for candidates to use it for any child care expenses they incur related to their service, not just costs related directly to campaigning. This means that lawmakers can (and do) use it to pay for child care costs that arise while they are on the job, such as during the 45-day legislative session.

One lawmaker who has not used the policy and does not anticipate using it because of the ages of her children, said as a younger parent she participated on a committee in her community and her local government offered to pay for a babysitter if she needed child care while she attended meetings. While she did not need this, she
appreciated the awareness that that could be a barrier to her service. Later, she served as a locally elected official. She said while local officials are legally allowed to use this policy and could benefit from it, because those campaigns often do not bring in much money in most communities, it’s not likely candidates would have enough funds to pay for child care. Raising the funds necessary to pay for child care would most likely significantly increase the time they spent campaigning and she said many people would not view that as a valuable trade-off.

Whether or not the lawmakers were personally using this policy, the overall feeling was that this policy communicated a positive message to women who may want to run for office. “There are already so many challenges and barriers associated with running for office that if we can reduce one more, it's a good move in the right direction,” said one of the women. When asked if there were other policies like this the women thought could be implemented to further support women candidates, the overall response from both the Democratic and Republican lawmakers was they felt many reasons women in Utah are not running for office and that the barriers they face are cultural and would be harder to legislate.

Based on the limited sample of my interviews, it seems that one way to improve the effectiveness of this policy would be coordinated efforts to better publicize it, both at the state and party level. This could include party leaders making sure to inform people of this policy at caucus night and specifically drawing the candidate's attention to this policy in the information that the Lt. Governor's office sends to candidates once they register to run for office. This also may look like organizations focused on encouraging women to run making sure to publicize this policy as well.
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

Policies allowing candidates to pay for child care expenses with campaign funds do not have an immediate impact on the rate of women running for lower-chamber legislative office. Anecdotal evidence in both the literature review of this paper and the qualitative interviews included in this research suggest a future relationship could emerge. However, there are many reasons why a lack of relationships could persist over time. Although state House members tend to be younger than state Senators, the average age of all legislators in the United States was 56 in 2015 (Kurtz 2015). Younger, first-time candidates may be more likely to have children, and those candidates often run for lower-level seats, such as municipal and county government or school boards. These races typically bring in fewer campaign dollars, meaning a woman who could benefit from this policy may be unable to use it. Since women candidates fundraise less than men candidates do and face unique challenges when they fundraise, using this policy can require women to trade one barrier to candidacy — care work responsibilities — for another — raising large amounts of money. Beyond looking at if these policies are increasing the ratios of women running in general elections from major parties, future research could also explore if the percentage of women running in primary elections is increasing. This is an important step in improving women’s representation not only for individual legislative districts but for legislative bodies as a whole.

Whether or not a future relationship is found between the percentage of women candidates running and these policies, these personal experiences provide evidence that these policies can be part of the effort to create more inclusive legislative bodies. Not
only do these policies have the potential to impact descriptive representation, but they can also have an effect on substantive representation. This policy is an example of legislation that can address some of the unique challenges women face, and all the states where it has been passed have a majority of men in the legislature. While it is possible men could be passing these policies to benefit themselves, it could also indicate that there are men in those legislatures who are concerned about supporting women candidates in their states.

This research looks at women as a monolith, which while useful in gaining a general understanding of the impact of this policy, future exploration of the ways age, income, race, and other demographic details are necessary to understand the impacts of this policy more fully. Future research could also explore whether the average age of candidates or the average income/net worth of candidates was decreasing in states where this policy is in place. This research relies on fixed effects to capture state-level differences. Future research should not do this in order to gain a better understanding of the factors impacting the use of these policies. Beyond researching the impact this policy has on candidates, there is value in exploring how candidates use the policy and if they feel it is flexible enough to meet their needs, or if there are ways it can be improved to have a greater impact.

Another area to explore in the future is how current and prospective candidates are informed about policies allowing them to use campaign funds to pay for child care. My interviews indicated that many women who are considering running for office may be concerned about child care and unaware of this option. In states like Utah where these policies are extremely flexible as to how a candidate or elected official can use them, a step that could increase the efficacy of these policies is better communicating their
existence to not only prospective candidates of all genders, but to the general public so that more people can benefit from these policies.
CITATIONS


