



# Iowa Skills2Compete 2019 Report

Building Smart Investments in Iowa's  
Workforce and Industries

Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition

# Call to Action: Low Unemployment and Growing Demands

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At the end of 2018, Iowa experienced one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation at 2.4 percent.<sup>1</sup> It is important to celebrate this achievement and the fact that more Iowans are working today than at any other point in the state's history. At the same time, though, employers across the state are struggling to fill open positions because of a shortage of available workers.

**Data shows that if every unemployed person in the Midwest was placed into an open job, there would still be over 400,000 jobs left to be filled.<sup>2</sup>**

In addition to the shortage of available workers, employers are also challenged to find applicants who are qualified to fill current job openings. In Iowa, there is an abundance of middle-skill jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and provide pathways to advancement, yet many people do not have the credentials and education required to meet the need.

As the number of open jobs grows, employers face greater demands, and families struggle to achieve self-sufficiency—the time to act is now. Infrastructure must be created across the state that not only prepares Iowans for these job opportunities, but also provides the necessary supports to allow them to maintain and advance in these positions. It is also crucial to include in these efforts those who are on the fringes of the workforce, such as returning citizens and people with disabilities, in order to combat the worker shortage and ensure that every resident of our state can contribute their talents and skills.





## Business perspective on closing the skills gap



“As we experience record low unemployment and continued job growth in the greater Des Moines region, **the demand for talent is the most critical issue facing the majority of our employers.** While this demand is impacting all industry sectors and affects all levels of skill, education, and experience, the highest degree of shortages are being experienced in middle-skill jobs. To continue the economic growth of our region and the state, it is critical that all of our adult population that is able to work has the education and training aligned to the jobs of today and into the future. Investing in education and training for those lacking the skills to meet current and future employer demand must be the top priority for the 2019 legislative session.”

**Mary Bontrager**  
Greater Des Moines Partnership,  
Executive Vice President of  
Talent Development



# The History and Future of Iowa's Education and Workforce Trends

Iowa's economy is changing. There are fewer well-paying jobs that only require a high school degree than there were forty years ago. Education or training beyond high school has become the new minimum threshold for Americans to earn a living wage and attain middle class status. In 1973, only 28 percent of U.S. jobs required education

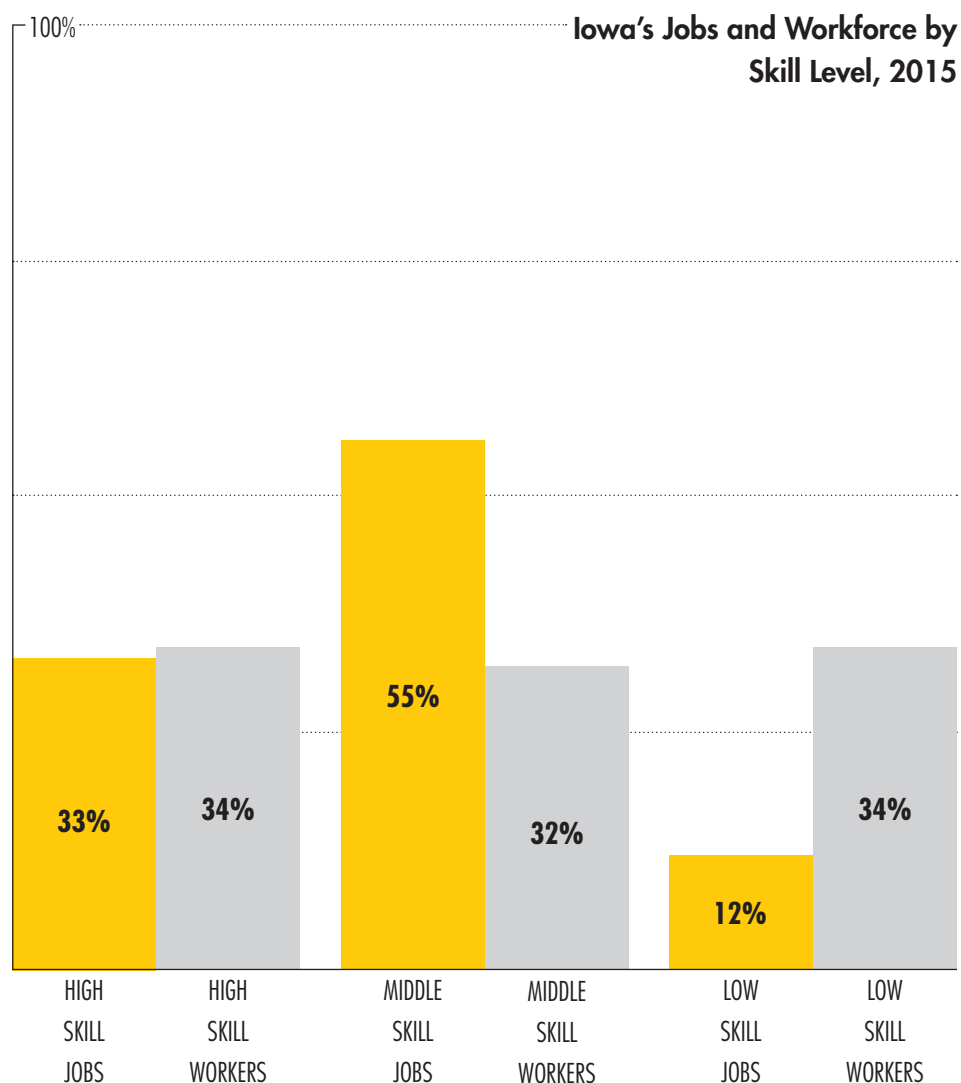
beyond a high school diploma; by 2025, almost two out of three jobs in the nation will require at least some postsecondary education or training.<sup>3</sup> Iowa is already experiencing this trend. Middle-skill positions will only continue to grow as technology improves, and it is critical that the skills and education of Iowa's workforce change accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

## Skills Gap

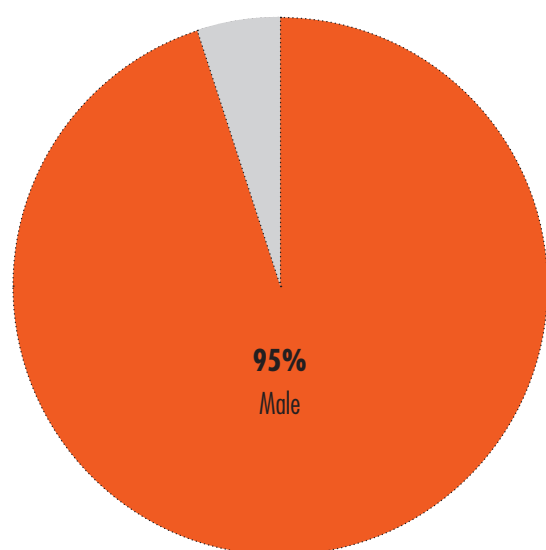
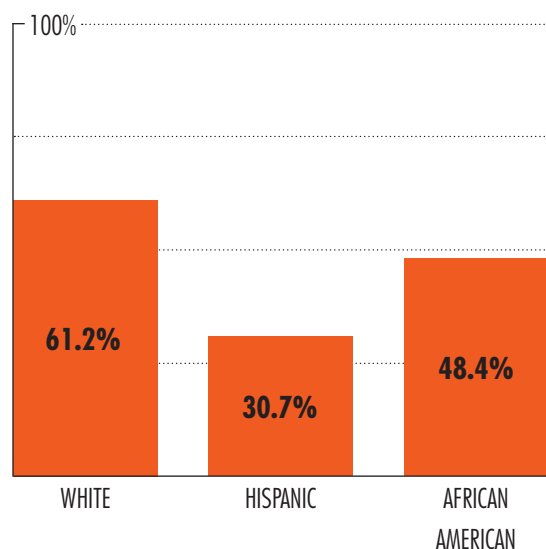
Jobs that generally require some education and training beyond high school, but less than a bachelor's degree, are called middle-skill jobs. These jobs are in high-demand now and will continue to be in demand well into the future. Middle-skill positions play a crucial part in the state's economy and also support working families by paying good wages and opportunities for advancement.

Although middle-skill jobs account for over half of the Iowa economy at 55 percent, only 32 percent of working Iowans have the skills and credentials to match what is required for these jobs. Iowa has an abundance of high school graduates and workers who have a bachelor's degree, yet the state is in need of more people who have completed trades programs, apprenticeships, and other middle-skill training opportunities.

Source: "Middle-Skill Jobs in Iowa," Iowa Workforce Development, November 2015.







### Disparities in Middle-Skill Training and Education

In order to meet Iowa's middle-skill workforce needs, it is important to engage all segments of the population in skills training and education. Currently, there are significant racial and gender disparities that persist in participation rates.

**For instance, while 61.2% of White Iowans over the age of 25 have attained some postsecondary education or training, only 30.7% of Hispanics and 48.4% of African Americans have education beyond high school.<sup>5</sup>**

Without postsecondary education, these minority groups are unable to access well-paying and fast-growing middle-skill jobs that need to be filled. Similarly, while women are slightly more likely than men to have education beyond high school, their participation in apprenticeship programs for middle-skill jobs is much lower.

**Between 2005 and 2013, more than 95% of participating Iowa apprentices were male.<sup>6</sup>**

In 2016, Iowa received a \$200,000 accelerator grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to increase the number of Registered Apprenticeships in the state and to promote greater inclusion and diversity in these opportunities. The skills gap will only be resolved if similar efforts continue to be undertaken to ensure that all demographics have access to training and education programs.





## Middle-Skill Jobs: An Opportunity to Achieve Self-Sufficiency

**In 2015, it was reported that Iowa had 400,000 middle-skill jobs that pay at least \$35,000 per year; this represented 26 percent of all jobs in Iowa. Forty percent of these jobs paid more than \$50,000 annually and an additional 14 percent had salaries of more than \$75,000.<sup>7</sup>**

These financial advantages represent an opportunity for middle-skill workers to obtain family-sustaining wages that will also work to reinforce a strong middle class in Iowa. The chart below highlights some of the most in-demand middle-skill occupations for 2018, along with their projected growth and median wages. The varied fields and interests these positions involve, as well as the well-paying wages and growth rates, make these occupations promising prospects for a range of middle-skill workers.

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Occupational Projections 2018-2028, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

### Middle-Skill Successes

Occupation	Annual Openings	2018-2028 % Projected Growth	Median Hourly Wage
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,390	6%	\$19.36
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	827	8%	\$18.75
Medical Assistants	771	28%	\$16.16
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	533	12%	\$20.06
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	481	18%	\$23.61
Computer User Support Specialists	469	13%	\$21.69
Dental Assistants	432	21%	\$18.77
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	265	12%	\$22.78

## State Policy Successes

State policymakers have taken significant steps to ensure that talent is available as employers bring on new workers. Since 2013, the state has invested \$12.5 million each year towards adult basic education, Pathways for Academic Career and Employment (PACE) programs, GAP tuition assistance, pathway navigators to assist students in PACE programs, and industry sector partnerships. Additionally, in 2017, the Skills2Compete Coalition effectively advocated for a new law that allows the state to recognize alternate pathways to achieving a high school equivalency degree. The passage of this law creates new opportu-

nities for Iowans to obtain this credential that is often a prerequisite to pursue postsecondary education and training and middle-skill occupations. In 2018, the coalition realized more success after leading advocacy efforts to eliminate an antiquated policy that mandated automatic driver's license revocations for non-driving drug offenses, which created significant barriers to education and employment for returning citizens. Year after year, the Skills2Compete Coalition collaborates with state officials to impact policy decisions that have a positive effect on Iowa's workforce.

## Federal Programs

### SNAP Employment & Training

Over the years, the Iowa Department of Human Services has taken action to participate more fully in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) “50-50” program. The federal program reimburses states up to 50 percent for expenses associated with providing supportive services and tuition to food stamp recipients enrolled in education and training. This program was designed to lead people to jobs and reduce the need for public assistance benefits.

### Pell Grant

The federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate students in order to promote access to postsecondary education. This grant program has provided opportunities for students across the country to attend college; however, these grants are not available to students who are pursuing short-term certificates. The law mandates that these funds cannot be used to pay for academic programs that are shorter than fifteen weeks, which effectively excludes many short-term job training programs. If Pell Grant eligibility were expanded to include these opportunities, it would provide access to training programs for many low-income individuals in Iowa who otherwise would not be able to afford this education.







## 2019 Workforce Policy Agenda

**The Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition advocates for policies that enable Iowans to obtain and sustain employment while also providing solutions to Iowa's growing middle-skill gap. The coalition offers these policy recommendations for the 2019 state legislative session:**

- + Maintain current investments in adult basic education, PACE programs, pathway navigators, industry sector partnerships and GAP tuition assistance at \$12.5 million and expand PACE programs to include apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.
- + Lead efforts to eliminate the child care "cliff effect" and increase access to quality and affordable child care by expanding the income eligibility level of the Child Care Assistance (CCA) program from 145 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level using a tiered co-pay schedule. Advocate for the stabilization of the child care provider market through CCA program improvements and reimbursement rates.
- + Support the Future Ready Iowa initiative to help grow Iowa's work force through new investments that build on the solid foundation of programs and funding currently in place.
- + Support efforts to increase awareness of affordable workforce housing issues and develop innovative policy solutions to address this growing problem.
- + Initiate a public-private partnership to increase opportunities for the direct care workforce to allow portability of credentials and training, support higher wages, and increase the talent pipeline.
- + Identify and support both public and private transportation solutions so communities have access to education, training and employment.
- + Support efforts to provide state identification cards to returning citizens upon exit from incarceration so that housing, employment and benefits can be secured.

**Maintain current investments in adult basic education, PACE programs, pathway navigators, industry sector partnerships and GAP Tuition Assistance at \$12.5 million and expand PACE programs to include apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.**

Investing in career pathways increases the likelihood that students who participate in the programs will be employed or will go on to pursue postsecondary education. With continued state support of pro-

grams like adult basic education, PACE, and GAP Tuition Assistance, more Iowans can work towards economic security and self-sufficiency that training and earning skilled credentials helps to provide. In turn, employers can rely on a dependable pool of ready-to-hire workers. These advantages could be increased even further if the PACE program is expanded to include apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities in addition to the traditional classroom experiences that the program already supports.

Program	Program Description	Numbers Served FY 18	Notable Impact
GAP Tuition Assistance	<p>GAP Tuition Assistance provides funding for need-based tuition assistance to applicants to enable completion of continuing education certificate training programs for in-demand occupations.</p> <p>There are currently 444 approved noncredit programs in which participants of the GAP Tuition Assistance program may enroll. The programs with the highest enrollment include certified nursing assistant (CNA), commercial vehicle operator and instructor, welding, and phlebotomy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2,407 – students applied for tuition assistance</li> <li>1,077 – students awarded tuition assistance</li> <li>943 – students completed training</li> <li>The remaining students were either actively participating or were waiting to participate in a program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The statewide program completion rate was 87.6%, compared to last year's completion rate of 79.9%</li> <li>78.1% of students that completed training in the FY2017 cohort were employed after using tuition assistance to complete an education program.</li> <li>There are 158 more approved programs for GAP participants than there were last year.</li> </ul>
Adult Education & Literacy Programs	<p>Adult Education and Literacy programs build skills for success by providing adults with the opportunity to acquire and improve functional skills necessary to enhance the quality of their lives as workers, family members, and citizens.</p> <p>Services include basic skills instruction, HSED test preparation, English for Speakers of Other Languages, college readiness skills instruction, job readiness skills instruction, and computer literacy skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15,684 – students enrolled</li> <li>11,247 – program persists</li> <li>5,430 students had a measureable skills gain</li> <li>1,496- HiSET awards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment has decreased over time, but the percentage of participants persisting in the program has increased.</li> </ul>
Pathways for Academic, Career, and Employment Program (PACE)	<p>PACE funding is used to implement a simplified, streamlined, and comprehensive process, along with customized support services, to enable eligible participants to acquire effective academic and employment training to secure gainful, quality, in-state employment. Community colleges that receive PACE funding are able to establish career pathways, employ pathway navigators, and develop regional industry sector partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4,390– students applied for tuition assistance under the PACE program</li> <li>3,223– students approved and accepted into the PACE program</li> <li>PACE-supported programs completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Certificate Programs: 432</li> <li>o Diploma Programs: 465</li> <li>o Associate Degree: 409</li> <li>o Industry Credential: 441</li> <li>o Total Awards Received by PACE Students: 1,747</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PACE navigators provided active participants with personal, career, and support services over 7,164 times during FY 2018 through interaction with each individual on a case-by-case basis.</li> </ul>

## Success Story ○

Growing up in a refugee camp in Nepal, the most Tara envisioned for her future was getting a job that paid enough to help her family. When she arrived in the United States at age 21, though, she started to dream of a new kind of future even though she could hardly understand English. She worked as a nursing assistant at an assisted living facility but didn't make enough money to save for a car or cover all her family's expenses. She wanted a better-paying job but knew that she would need a high school diploma to apply. She reached out to Des Moines Area

Community College where she was supported both personally and academically as she worked on achieving her high school equivalency diploma. After five months, she took the HiSET test and passed. Now that she has her degree, Tara is participating in the Central Iowa HealthWorks program to gain the skills and credentials she needs to become a certified nursing assistant. Although the road to becoming a nurse continues to be challenging, Tara's future looks bright with a career that has potential for upward mobility and sustainable wages.



### **Lead efforts to eliminate the child care "cliff effect" and increase access to quality and affordable child care by expanding the income eligibility level of the Child Care Assistance (CCA) program from 145 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level using a tiered co-pay schedule. Advocate for the stabilization of the child care provider market through CCA program improvements and reimbursement rates.**

In 2016, almost 18,000 Iowa parents either did not accept a job or greatly changed their job because of child care issues. Even when parents are able to work, many lose productivity because of inconsistent child care. For example, in a six-month period, child care issues cause parents to miss an average of 4.3 days of work. Sixty-five percent of parents have arrived late or left work early due to child care. When parents must unexpectedly miss work, businesses in the United States lose up to \$4.4 billion annually.<sup>8</sup> The losses are great for families and the economy when child care is not affordable or accessible.

When a household increases in income, even slightly, work supports may be lost, resulting in a net loss of resources. Child care provides a prime example of this "cliff effect." Iowa's Child Care Assistance benefits abruptly cease at 145 percent of the federal poverty level. In 2018, this sudden change in eligibility would have caused a family (no longer considered living in poverty) to lose roughly \$4,540 annually, which is money that is desperately needed to cover a basic budget. Because of this "cliff effect," a \$0.15/hour pay increase can deplete a family's net pool of resources by 20 percent. This causes a disincentive to work additional hours or aim for a higher paying job which in turn can decrease availability of middle-skill workers and quality employees for Iowa's employers. These families remain stagnant, and so does Iowa's economy.

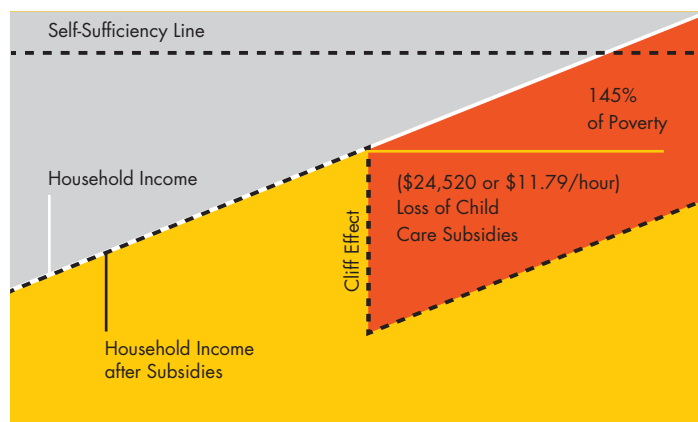
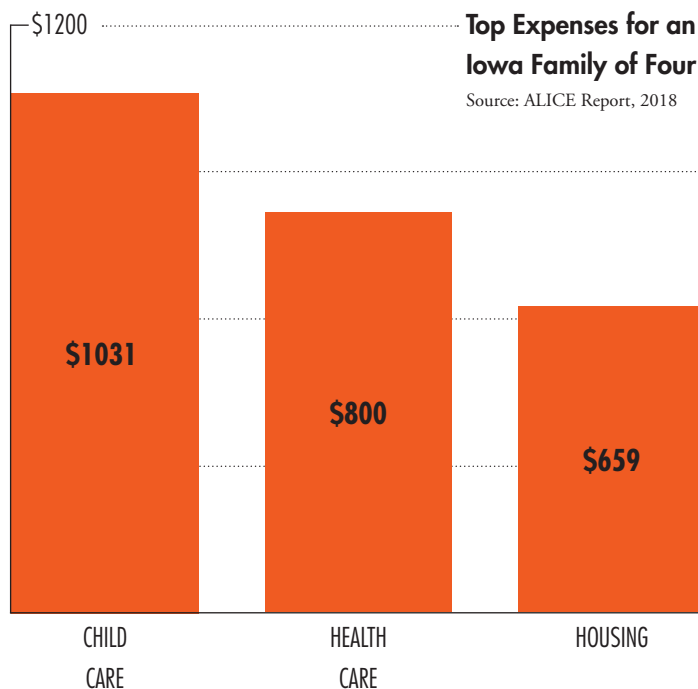
A solution for this child care issue is to raise the family income eligibility rate for child care assistance up from 145 percent to 200 percent of the poverty level. In other words, families were previously eligible if their annual income was \$24,520 or less, but by raising the income eligibility rate to 200 percent of the poverty level, a single parent that makes up to \$33,820<sup>9</sup> a year can be eligible for at least some level of child care assistance for one child. In the United States, the average state child care assistance rate is 182 percent. At 145 percent<sup>10</sup> of the federal poverty level, Iowa has the 11th lowest eligibility level in the nation.<sup>11</sup> By raising the eligibility to 200 percent, many families will avoid the "cliff effect" and parents will be able to maintain their productivity in the workforce because they will have accessible and affordable care for their children.

Child care assistance does not make child care free for the eligible families, though. Parents currently pay a co-pay if they receive state child care assistance. Parents will continue to pay an increased co-pay for their child care as their income climbs. To support families who are the most vulnerable to the "cliff effect," complete coverage of child care for families living at 185 percent of the federal poverty level and below is recommended. For families at 186-200 percent of the federal poverty level, a tiered-exit approach should be implemented with increasing co-pays to ensure a smooth transition from Child Care Assistance instead of an abrupt cliff.

○ **A raise in pay that moves a family above 145% of the federal poverty level means they no longer qualify for CCA subsidies.**



In addition to repairing Iowa's child care assistance program for the families who benefit, it is also important to stabilize the child care provider market through CCA program improvements and reimbursement rates. Many child care programs refuse to accept CCA subsidies because they can receive more money from families paying the market rate. In fact, since 2012, there has been a 48 percent decrease in the number of programs accepting subsidies across the state.<sup>12</sup> This dramatic decrease has created child care deserts across Iowa, creating issues of accessibility in addition to the affordability challenges that already exist. In 2018, the state legislature increased provider reimbursement rates at a cost of \$8.6 million in hopes of creating additional child care slots. Additional efforts to improve the child care industry should also be explored to allow child care providers a chance to earn sustaining wages themselves.



Source: Adapted from Child & Family Policy Center, 2018

- + The average number of children participating in the Child Care Assistance program per month in FY 2018 was 24,208, an increase of 6.7% over FY 2017.<sup>13</sup>
- + In 11 states – Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington – and the District of Columbia, full-time care is greater than 90% of the typical cost of rent.<sup>14</sup>
- + The average annual income of child care workers in Iowa is \$20,520. (A family of two would be living at 121% of the federal poverty level.)<sup>15</sup>



### The Child Care Cliff: Kelly's Story

Kelly Dejoode was panicking. She had just received a letter saying she would no longer receive Child Care Assistance from the state. She was going to drop off the so-called "Child Care Cliff."

Without assistance, Kelly would go from paying \$17 a week for her three-year-old son Jackson to attend Oak Academy in Des Moines full time to paying \$180 a week. Her wages—a little more than \$13 an hour—as a teaching assistant in a Head Start classroom couldn't cover the child care increase as well as her family's other basic needs, including rent, gas, and food. She didn't realize that by starting to work full time, she would be pushed just over the threshold of receiving assistance.

For a month, Kelly scrambled to find other child care options she could afford, the cheapest of which was \$125 a week and required an hour commute one way. She considered quitting her job. Eventually, her child care center offered her a scholarship, available to only a handful of families each year through United Way of Central Iowa's Women United, to offset the huge expense.

Today, Kelly feels secure knowing that her son has a safe and engaging place to go to school while she works. She is striving to become debt-free and to enjoy as much time as possible with her son. She'll graduate within the year with her associate degree. "I am working on everything to get my life back on track," she says.

**Support efforts to increase awareness of affordable workforce housing issues and develop innovative policy solutions to address this growing problem.**

Even though Iowa has been nationally recognized for its low cost of living, there are many Iowans who struggle to find housing that they can afford. Housing is considered to be affordable for families if it costs less than 30 percent of the household income. When households must put a greater proportion of their income toward housing, they are considered to be housing-cost burdened and will often have to sacrifice other essential expenses, such as child care, transportation, health care or food. Across the state, 40 percent of renters are housing-cost burdened and pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent.<sup>16</sup>

One of the main reasons that Iowans struggle to obtain affordable housing is that wage increases have not kept pace with rent increases. Over the past 10 years, the wage necessary to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment raised 26 percent while actual wages had only raised 16 percent. Low-income individuals and families are impacted the most by this disparity. They are left with very few housing options in Iowa's metros and rural communities.

When working Iowans struggle to afford rent, many must forgo opportunities that could increase their wages, such as education and training, just to make ends meet. On the other hand, economic growth can be stunted if businesses and potential employers cannot expand in Iowa communities because of lack of housing options for their workforce. Housing must be addressed at a systemic level to eliminate barriers that currently exist to ensure Iowa's future economic success.

- + A minimum wage earner working full-time cannot afford a studio apartment in any of Iowa's 99 counties.<sup>17</sup>**
- + In 25 counties across the state, a median income renter is unable to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.<sup>18</sup>**
- + From 2006-2016, the Des Moines and West Des Moines area lost 2,526 units that rented at \$650 a month or lower.<sup>19</sup>**

**Support the Future Ready Iowa initiative to help grow Iowa's workforce through new investments that build on the solid foundation of programs and funding currently in place.**

Future Ready Iowa is a statewide initiative to build Iowa's talent pipeline to meet future workforce needs. The program's goal is for 70 percent of Iowa's workforce to have education or training beyond high school by 2025. In 2017, 58 percent of Iowans had some postsecondary education or training, meaning that 127,700 more workers would need additional training to meet the 70 percent goal.<sup>20</sup>

In 2018, the Iowa legislature unanimously passed the Future Ready Iowa Act. This bipartisan legislation established a Last Dollar Scholarship program to provide access to education opportunities that lead to high-demand jobs, and the Iowa Employer Innovation Fund to create public-private partnerships that support wraparound services and expanded work-based learning. It will be important to prioritize new investments in the upcoming legislative session to implement these programs, which will bolster and reinforce the strong programs and funding that Iowa already has in place.

To learn more about Future Ready Iowa, the strategies behind the initiative, and helpful resources for skill-building and career exploration, visit [www.futurereadyiowa.gov](http://www.futurereadyiowa.gov).

**Initiate a public-private partnership to increase opportunities for the direct care workforce to allow portability of credentials and training, support higher wages, and increase the talent pipeline.**

A direct care professional is an individual on the frontline of service delivery who provides supportive services and care to people experiencing illnesses or disabilities. They are part of one of the fastest growing sectors in the state. The health care and social assistance industry as a whole has added an additional 1,500 jobs per year and it was the only industry in Iowa that still experienced job gains through the most recent economic recession.<sup>21</sup> Direct care occupations are projected to grow rapidly through 2028, with 35 percent growth in home health aide positions and 9 percent growth for nursing assistant positions.<sup>22</sup> This continued growth is due to an aging population, technological improvements, changes in patient preferences, and federal funding shifts toward in-home and community-based care.<sup>23</sup> Even though there has been significant growth in direct care occupations throughout the past and continued growth is projected for the future, challenges in retaining and recruiting employees persist.

**Identify and support both public and private transportation solutions so communities have access to education, training and employment.**

Transportation has proven to be a significant barrier to people who are pursuing employment opportunities and enrollment in education and training programs. Even those who have the motivation to find work or improve their skills are stalled when they lack affordable and reliable transportation options. When transportation becomes an impediment to education and employment success for individuals, the workforce and economy suffers as a whole. Comprehensive transportation solutions must be created at the state level to ensure that middle-skill workers are able to travel to middle-skill jobs and training.

**+ 10% of Iowans ages 18-64 do not have a driver's license. That represents over 180,000 people.<sup>27</sup>**



Direct care occupations experienced some of the most job openings in 2018, likely due to struggles with recruitment and retention. Direct care occupations face obstacles with recruiting and retaining workers because of low wages and high turnover rates.

Actions must be taken to make the direct care profession more attractive to meet continuously growing demands. One such improvement would be to make credentials and training more portable. Currently, direct care workers face challenges when switching jobs because they do not have access to a centralized record of their training credits. Improving this system could lessen the burden on direct-care workers, leading to retaining these individuals in the field for a longer period of time. It is also important for private employers and state government to collaborate on ways that wages could be improved for these professionals to further address challenges that exist for recruitment and retention.

**Support efforts to provide state identification cards to returning citizens upon exit from incarceration so that housing, employment and benefits can be secured.**

Iowans who have been released from incarceration have unique barriers that they face in trying to make themselves available for the middle-skill jobs that exist. One of the most immediate challenges they face upon release is their inability to apply for housing, education, benefits, or employment because they do not have a state identification card. If these forms of identification were provided at the correction facilities as part of the release process, returning citizens would be able to immediately start the process of reentering their communities.

There are many other challenges that returning citizens face when trying to become productive members of Iowa's communities, such as hiring practices, education scholarships and grants, and housing application processes. In order to engage all populations of the Iowa workforce, the needs and barriers of returning citizens cannot be ignored.

**+ Every year, approximately 5,000 citizens return to neighborhoods across Iowa after serving time in state prisons.<sup>28</sup>**

**+ Iowa ranks among the worst—42nd out of 51 states (including District of Columbia)—for the number of barriers in place for ex-offenders.<sup>29</sup>**

**+ 63% of direct care professionals in Iowa have received some form of postsecondary education or training<sup>24</sup>**

**+ Wages for direct care workers have remained stagnant over the last ten years. In 2007, the average wage was \$11.80 while the average was \$12.48 in 2017. This represents an increase of just 6% to an already low-paying occupation.<sup>25</sup>**

**+ Turnover costs employers \$2,000 per direct care employee.<sup>26</sup>**



# Moving Iowa Forward

Future Ready Iowa has generated important statewide conversations around workforce needs and skill training. Advocates from all backgrounds and sectors have begun to make workforce development a top priority. By embracing the 2019 Workforce Policy Agenda of the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition, this work can continue making an impact. Continued investments in skill and credential attainment and adult basic education, along with new investments toward Future Ready Iowa programs, will ensure that the skills of the workforce match the skills of in-demand jobs across the state. Education is not enough on its own, though, and the state must think more systemically about the barriers that exist to these education and job opportunities. Work supports such as childcare assistance, affordable housing, and affordable transportation are critical to help Iowa's workforce contribute consistently. Iowa must also give special attention to the direct care workforce and continue to create incentives for workers to join and remain in health care jobs. Finally, to engage every member of society in workforce development efforts, hurdles must be removed so that returning citizens can be productive once they reenter Iowa's workforce. By creating this comprehensive infrastructure for Iowans, we can get closer to meeting our goal of bridging the middle-skill gap to create a more vibrant and strong Iowa economy that benefits employers and families alike.



## Acknowledgements

The paper was authorized by the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition led by Central Iowa Works and United Way of Central Iowa. Information and support have also been provided by the Iowa Department of Education and the National Skill Coalition. This report was designed by DMACC students Smail Buljubasic and Katie Ryan

**To learn more about the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition, please visit [www.centraliowaworks.org](http://www.centraliowaworks.org).**

## Endnotes

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## About the Skills2Compete Coalition

The Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition is a state-wide partnership of Iowa’s business community, education, legislative and workforce development leaders that serve as an organized voice for “skills” at the state’s capitol and build more policymaker support for state policies that grow Iowa’s economy by investing in its workforce.

## Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition

Association of Iowa Workforce Partners  
 Central Iowa Works  
 Des Moines Area Regional  
 Transit Authority (DART)  
 DMACC  
 Evelyn K. Davis Center  
 EveryStep (HCI/VNS)  
 Goodwill of Central Iowa  
 Greater Des Moines Partnership  
 Horizons a Family Service Alliance  
 Iowa Association of Business and Industry  
 Iowa Association of Community  
 College Trustees  
 Iowa Association of Community  
 College Trustees (IACCT)  
 Iowa CareGivers Association  
 Iowa Department of Education  
 Iowa Employment Solutions at DMACC  
 Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO  
 Iowa Literacy Council  
 Iowa State Education Association  
 Kirkwood Community College  
 National Skills Coalition  
 Northeast Iowa Community College  
 Project IOWA  
 Representative Tim Kacena  
 United Way of Central Iowa  
 United Way of East Central Iowa  
 United Way of East Central Iowa  
 United Way of Siouxland  
 United Way of Wapello County  
 United Ways of Iowa  
 UnityPoint Health - Des Moines  
 Urban Dreams

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