



MISSOURI SENATE  
JEFFERSON CITY

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## **Sen. Chris Koster Seeks to Expand Child Care Subsidy Eligibility**

JEFFERSON CITY — Sen. Chris Koster (D-Harrisonville) today (1/23) introduced a measure that would expand the income eligibility criteria for people receiving state-funded child care assistance through either vouchers or direct reimbursements to child care providers.

Senate Bill 1006 would increase the income eligibility cap, essentially making it easier for working families to seek state assistance. The generally accepted federal poverty level for a family of four in 2008 is \$21,200. Missouri currently has the lowest eligibility limit for state child care subsidies in the entire country at 110 percent of the federal poverty level. A family of four would need to make less than approximately \$23,320 per year to qualify for any child care assistance.

Under SB 1006, the cap would increase to around \$27,560, or 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Those with a household income that surpasses that amount would receive reduced subsidy benefits. If the person's household income reaches more than approximately \$33,920, or 160 percent of the federal poverty level, he or she would no longer be eligible for state assistance with child care.

Sen. Koster said Missouri's current child care subsidy program allows for working families to be productive and make higher wages, leading to a greater contribution to the state's economy. By investing in the education of the children of working families, over the course of time the state will pay less for special education, social welfare programs and the criminal justice system. SB 1006 allows for these effects to be even more far-reaching.

"Paying for child care is an enormous burden for many Missourians," said Sen. Koster. "It is unacceptable that our policies make Missouri the last state to extend our reach to working families who struggle with how to pay for their children's care."

Sen. Koster's initiative will next be referred to a Senate committee for further consideration. Committee approval returns the bill to the Senate for debate by the full body.

"I'm certain that my colleagues will understand the importance of passing this piece of legislation," said Sen. Koster. "We should do our part to protect Missouri's most vulnerable citizens."

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