



Editorial

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Accentuate the Positive Developments in Iowa

US News ranked Iowa as the #1 state for opportunity last week, continuing the consistent positive trend from the past several years. Unfortunately, this type of positive news can be drowned out by noise on other splashier headlines like Iowa being closed for business and opposed to growth. The fact is, the bills that have seen the most intense breathless coverage this year have not passed both legislative chambers including the bathroom bill, Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and bills aimed toward eliminating tenure. More important work, to lean into the opportunities that exist in Iowa, have been overwhelmingly bipartisan and their prospects seem much more likely, with far less fan fair.

Childcare has become an extremely important workforce development issue to integrate moms and dads into the workforce by ensuring safe and affordable options for their children. Governor Reynolds has outlined an additional \$3 million in spending in her budget for Child Care Challenge Fund and there are multiple other bills moving through the chambers that provide a variety of tools to address this complex problem. Both parties are working together with a mutual understanding that reintegration of stay at home parents is just one strategy to address our talent needs. The Iowa House of Representatives sent eight bills to the Iowa Senate for consideration that would address the childcare needs by creating incentives for employers and developers, providing grants, and addressing the cliff effect.

Housing needs exist across the state in both rural and urban communities. The Governor's Economic Recovery Advisory Board outlined broad needs for housing and the Legislature is working, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan manner, to provide up to an additional 25,000 units through a diverse housing omnibus bill.

With work from home and virtual classes for some students, the COVID-19 pandemic further brought into focus the vast needs for broadband in both commercial, residential and industrial settings. The Governor's bold push for \$450 million over three years will put Iowa ahead of neighboring states and provide a necessary competitive advantage for manufacturing and economic development potentials. Both republican and democrat legislators have supported the governor's proposal and continue to work together to find an agreeable solution.

Combined these three efforts have accumulated over 800 votes in support through subcommittees, committees and on the floor of a chamber with less than 50 votes against in



total. There is still much work to be done but there is no doubt these incredibly important baseline efforts will pass. With increased funding and positive changes to policy for childcare, housing and broadband.

In addition to these efforts being bipartisan, these proposed investments have all been done in a fiscally responsible manner while other states in the Midwest struggle to meet basic budgetary requirements. Iowa was ranked the best state in the country to respond to COVID-19 from the nonpartisan Council of State Governments after ending the fiscal year with a \$305 million surplus. Despite the pandemic, businesses have continued to see growth opportunities and remain open for business. Iowa leaders continued efforts to remain fiscally responsible provided the opportunity to make large investments and assist both Iowans and businesses during the pandemic.

Iowa continues to address economic needs for both Iowans and businesses in Iowa to ensure the recovery and continued growth. It is important to accentuate the positive steps forward the State is taking rather than the less favorable bills that have failed to gain traction. Iowa continues to remain affordable and a leader in economic opportunity.

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