755 Oak Hill Road
Mountain Top, PA 18707
www.i2M.com

Written Testimony for the Record

Alex Grover
Chief Executive Officer, i2M

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Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

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Chairman Kiley, Ranking Member Bonamici, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am the CEO and owner of i2M, a United States manufacturer of flexible polymer films used in residential and commercial applications. We are an innovative, agile, global company proudly headquartered in northeastern Pennsylvania. We operate around the clock, we compete internationally, and like many manufacturers across this country, we are actively investing in growing, upskilling, and strengthening the incredible American manufacturing workforce.

I am also the mother of a five-month-old. If I did not have reliable, high-quality child care, it would be difficult for me to run my company, let alone be here testifying today. That is not a personal anecdote. It is a workforce reality.

At i2M, child care is not a perk. It is workforce infrastructure.

Manufacturing in the United States is experiencing a renaissance. Tariffs have helped level the playing field. Companies are reshoring work. Capital investment is happening. But none of that matters if we cannot reliably staff our plants. Manufacturing cannot be automated out of every challenge. It depends on skilled people showing up, on time, every day, across all shifts. Many of those people are parents. I have the privilege of working alongside many of those parents, and they are highly skilled, disciplined, and among the most capable problem-solvers in our workforce. They are building long-term, high-paying careers that keep American manufacturing competitive. Accessible, great child care makes that possible.

We invested in child care because it was the right business decision.

Our current child care program launched in 2022. We contract for child care slots through an excellent local provider with multiple locations, reserving access specifically for i2M team members. i2M covers a meaningful portion of the cost so rates are substantially reduced, making care that is typically in very high demand and often waitlisted accessible to our team. The provider also offers enhanced flexibility for our workforce, including options like drop-in care, and extended hours designed for shift work, not just nine-to-five jobs. The program is available to team members immediately upon joining i2M. Participation is voluntary, and families retain full choice.

The decision to make this a permanent investment was shaped by our experience during COVID.

In 2020, while offices across the country went dark, i2M remained fully operational as an essential business. Our team members continued to report to work every day, and many parents faced an impossible choice between showing up for work or managing virtual learning at home. That was not a choice we were willing to accept.

In response, we implemented a temporary solution, hiring a teacher and creating a structured learning environment at i2M for school-aged children, to support working parents so our operations could continue. It worked. More importantly, it revealed something structural. Child care was not a temporary crisis issue. It was a permanent – but addressable – workforce barrier.

Our learnings from that time directly informed the child care program we operate today, intentionally designed to address the same workforce challenges in a scalable, sustainable way.

The business outcomes of addressing it directly and permanently have been clear.

Since the inception of our permanent child care partnership, retention among team members with children enrolled is nearly 100 percent. Unplanned call-offs - which we define as when team members cannot report for scheduled shifts - have dropped significantly in that group, reducing production disruptions, overtime costs, and safety risks in a 24/7 manufacturing environment. Production stability improves when people are not constantly scrambling to solve child care emergencies.

One example illustrates the broader impact: An i2M team member enrolled his children in our program. Previously, his wife stayed home because the exorbitant cost of high-quality child care outweighed what she was able to earn at the time. With affordable, reliable care, she was able to reenter the workforce and ultimately joined i2M as a Material Handler. This means one more household with higher income, greater stability, and two committed i2Mers building careers in manufacturing. That is not social policy. It is a clear example of capitalism working as it should: aligning incentives in a way that benefits families, businesses, and the broader economy.

I want to be very clear about something. Private business can and should help solve workforce challenges, but it must be done in a financially sustainable way. That is where incentives matter.

Pennsylvania's employer child care tax credit is a helpful signal, but at $150 per employee on a $500 contribution, it is not strong enough to materially change behavior for most employers. Incentives have to move the ROI calculation, not just acknowledge good intentions. Organizations like the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission have played an important role in raising employer awareness and helping businesses understand how these tools can be used effectively. The expanded Employer-Provided Child Care Credit under Section 45F does exactly what strong policy should do. By allowing employers to recover 40 to 50 percent of qualified child care investments, it meaningfully alters the economics and makes action justifiable at scale. It leverages market behavior instead of regulation, rewards voluntary private investment, and allows employers to participate without becoming child care operators. To fully realize its potential, implementation must remain practical and business-friendly, with flexible definitions and manageable compliance. When incentives are designed this way, private capital moves. Tax credits do not replace private investment, but they do unlock it.

What I recommend Congress do is focus on what works. Preserve and strengthen employer-focused tax credits that incentivize voluntary private investment. Ensure the expanded 45F credit is implemented in a way that is usable by real businesses, including manufacturers of all sizes, without unnecessary complexity. When employers are given clear, flexible tools, they design solutions that fit their workforce, their schedules, and their local labor markets.

I am here today not just to talk about what i2M has done, but what I want other US manufacturers to do. We compete for far too small a pool of skilled talent. Manufacturing is not an entry-level stop. It is a career. If manufacturing leaders invest in workforce-enabling solutions like child care, more people can enter manufacturing, build skills, and strengthen our domestic talent base. A rising tide lifts all ships.

I want to close with this. Private enterprise can play a central role in solving workforce challenges like child care, not because it is charitable, but because it is effective. When solutions are designed with a business lens, they move faster, cost less, and endure. Enabling parents to participate fully in the workforce through employer-driven child care solutions is one of the most practical, scalable ways to grow American manufacturing and strengthen US competitiveness. If Congress aligns incentives correctly, private business will do the rest.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.