

Name: Bill Stritzler

Date of Testimony: 1/19/2023

Committee: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Remarks:

My name is Bill Stritzler, I am the managing director and owner of Smugglers Notch Resort, America's family resort. This morning I am going to tell you the Smuggs story. Not everyone can do what we have done but all would benefit if the state can do what Smuggs has done. I think I testified on this subject in 2009 when I was the chair of the Business Roundtable. Thirteen years later and I'm back to testify on the same topic. Last year Smugglers was faced with a real crisis in our efforts to recruit people that we needed to be able to provide our guests with the service that we want to provide. Despite hiring around 70-80 international employees, we had many, many jobs that were unfilled. We were trying to figure out how to fill them. We knew there were lots of parents in the community who didn't have jobs but would like jobs. It was a perfect storm opportunity for a business – pulling together the needs of the community with the needs of our business.

We decided that we would offer free child care. I can tell you that decision did not come without internal angst. Our financial people said "what's the ROI on providing child care." I said no, we are not going to do an ROI. We don't do an ROI on supporting the Sheriff's Dept. We don't do an ROI on plowing our roads when it snows. We don't do an ROI on the annual school budget. We don't do any ROI on legislative salaries. We decided to try it and see what happens. The results were extraordinary. Within two and a half weeks, we filled every job opening and quickly. We came to understand that providing child care results in more benefits than we typically hear about. Our payroll went up about 1.5%. We have 125 kids in our child care. We all know about the laws of unintended consequences; we have had no negative consequences from this decision, but we have had many positives. Children are happier, relationships among families changed into a happier environment. Which is positive for the community, the community gained because they brought home a paycheck, the child gained from a great experience, and families are happier. We didn't anticipate any of that when we decided to offer free child care. But when we learned this we said, I guess we did the right thing. And I'm glad that we did it.