HOLDING IT ALL TOGETHER

EXHIBIT C2

Commissioned by Ingeborg Initiatives and the Women's Foundation of Arkansas

Working moms are crucial for Arkansas's economy, yet they face mounting pressures that threaten their workforce participation and financial stability. Rising child care costs and inflexible workplace policies have created a perfect storm that is contributing to women opting out of the labor force—with significant consequences for Arkansas families, businesses, and the state's economic potential. **Ingeborg Investments and the Women's Foundation of Arkansas commissioned this study to learn more about how working moms are holding it all together and what we as a state can do to respond to their needs for workplace flexibility, affordable child care, paid leave, and a supportive village.**

Here's what we learned.

Arkansas moms want to work – and are working.

- Prime working age mothers (25-54) are actually more likely to be employed full-time than women without children in the home.

Child care costs are a critical barrier to employment.

- Child care access is an **economic lifeline** that makes work possible. Losing it can mean leaving the workforce or falling into financial insecurity.
- 69% of moms we surveyed identified child care costs as a barrier to employment, making it the single most cited obstacle.
- The average cost of child care for one infant in Arkansas is $8,900/year and $17,500/year for an infant and a preschooler. That's 27% of median household income!

Flexible hours is the most desired workplace support.

- Arkansas mothers want to work – but they need workplaces that accommodate the realities of family life.

> **"Employers… do not need to offer elaborate benefit programs; they simply need to recognize the value of mom's work and give her the flexibility she needs to better manage multiple responsibilities."**

Maternal leave is inadequate.

- When we surveyed working moms about how much time they had off after giving birth, one out of five had to go back to work in less than six weeks.
- The absence of paid family leave forces women to choose between financial stability and their health and their children's well-being.

The invisible mental load is real and unsustainable.

- Mothers in Arkansas feel the mental load of complex routines managing work, childcare, and family life, and persistent fear of economic instability.
- Many mothers described yearning for a "village" of community support, but relatively few reported having robust networks. Those who did emphasized it as essential to their ability to maintain employment.

> **"Someone else owns every bit of my time."**

The evidence is compelling: workplace flexibility, child care access, paid family leave, and a supportive village are not "women's issues"—they are workforce, economic development, and competitiveness issues.

To access the full report, scan the QR code or go to **womensfoundationar.org/momsinAR**.

WOMEN'S FOUNDATION ARKANSAS