

## Statement for the Record

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HELP Subcommittee on Children and Families Hearing:  
*“Everyday Expenses and Everyday Americans:  
How High Costs Impact Children and Families”*

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Chairman Casey, Ranking Member Tuberville, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Erin Wiggle and I currently live in Worcester Township, Pennsylvania along with my husband and children.

I am testifying before you today to share my families’ experience with rising costs. First, I want to share a bit about my family. My husband and I are both retired Army Veterans, serving together from 1995-2010. Today, we own a non-profit goat and farm animal rescue that grew out of our community’s tremendous need for farm animal rescue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, my husband and I are the proud parents of 11 children from ages three to 27, six of whom are adopted. After having five children of our own, we chose to expand our family through foster care and adoption. Over the course of 12 years in the foster care system, we have cared for upwards of 50 children. Many of the children we have fostered and since adopted have special needs, including Down Syndrome, Dandy-Walker Syndrome, Tourette syndrome, and a genetic disorder that is currently unnamed.

Between our business and children, we incur many expenses, from diapers and food to gas and vet costs. This is particularly true given the medical needs of some of our children with special needs. Some require special diets, while others require frequent trips to specialists.

These costs add up—and have become more burdensome since the pandemic. For example, yogurt used to be 4 for \$1, now they are \$1 each. American cheese went from \$4.99 to \$9.99. I used to be able to buy a bale of hay for under \$5, now they are at least \$10. Dairy products have increased tremendously. We have also seen

products we use every day, like laundry detergent, shrink, while we are stuck paying the same price. This means that while I used to buy laundry detergent every month, I am now buying it more frequently. Similarly, paper products have gone up in price while also shrinking in size. At one time I could buy paper plates, paper towels & toilet paper for the month. Now I find we are needing to restock in 3 weeks' time.

Our older children are also now beginning to live on their own and make financial decisions of their own. Our oldest son joined the military and is currently stationed in Arizona. Three of our other children have tried to stay local but have found it's not a possibility to stay in the area, as housing prices are far too high for the typical 20-something. They struggle to afford things, like groceries, utilities & health insurance—things that our generation took for granted.

High costs have impacted every generation of our family.

My family and community have wondered why costs have continued to stay high—and even continue to rise following the pandemic. My husband works in logistics, so we are very aware and understanding of the supply chain challenges that the market faced during the pandemic—but the continued increases in cost make no sense. Starting wages have remained the same, yet the price of nearly everything has gone up. The average employee will work an hour, and still can not afford a block of Velveeta cheese.

Senator Casey's work on greedflation—exposing large corporations who have continued to increase their prices beyond what was necessary during the pandemic to inflate their own profits—has resonated with my family. From straight price increases to junk fees to what Senator Casey is calling “shrinkflation,” it is not fair to consumers.

Companies should be able to make a profit, but not by taking advantage of the average family. I want to be able to continue to give my children the life they deserve, and continue to operate our rescue, but these costs have strained our family and companies should be aware of the impact their actions have on consumers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share my experience today.