

Families with Two Children May Be Allowed Nannies

FOREIGN HELP : Critics say that the proposal will not help boost the birth rate, because only the rich are able to hire foreign nannies to look after their children

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The government is considering allowing families that have a second child to hire foreign nannies in an attempt to raise the country's low birth rate — one of the world's lowest; but labor affairs authorities disagree with the proposal.

Chiu Yueh-yun (邱月雲), a Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) official responsible for foreign labor management, said there is no substantial connection between allowing child-bearing families to employ foreign caregivers and the growth in the birth rate of a country.

“From worldwide experiences, there is no case that shows the import of foreign caregivers has helped raise the birth rate,” she said.

As a result, the CLA will not endorse the proposal initiated by other government agencies to encourage local couples to have children, Chiu said.

Under the existing regulations on employing foreign household caregivers, only families with at least three children aged under six are eligible to hire a foreign nanny.

The cost of hiring foreign caregivers is much lower than employing Taiwanese to do the same job.

Meanwhile, Taiwan Labor Front secretary-general Son Yu-lian (孫友聯) said that relaxing restrictions on employing foreign workers would not help ordinary working class families. He said it would only benefit rich people because they are the only ones who have the money to hire people to tend to their children.

As Taiwan ages and its birth rate declines, the government is being forced to come up with measures to tackle the problem.

According to the Ministry of the Interior's latest statistics on births in the country, Taiwan's birth rate has fallen to 8.29 births per 1,000 people in 2009, a record low.

Council for Economic Planning and Development Minister Christina Liu (劉憶如) said on Friday that allowing families with a second child to hire foreign caregivers is an option for the government to consider as it tries to help families cut down on the costs of raising children.

The council has found that since most women will continue to work after marriage, they are faced with a “job or kids” dilemma.



Nannies for Two-Child Families

A. Pre-Reading Discussion.

1. Do you know anyone who has a foreign nanny (or helper) living in their home? If yes, who and why?
2. Would you like to hire a foreign nanny to care for your children? Explain why or why not.
3. Do you know anything about the laws regarding hiring foreign nannies, helpers or maids?

B. Read the article. Try to guess the meaning of any words, expressions, etc, that you don't know.

C. Match the definitions in the table below with the highlighted words in the article.

(Part I) nannies / critics / proposal / boost / birth rate / authorities / Council / substantial / child-bearing

_____	suggestion
_____	a government department
_____	having children
_____	the number of children that are born
_____	people who live in your home and take care of your children
_____	a lot; much
_____	an official organisation that has the power to make decisions
_____	people who don't like something and say so publicly
_____	increase; make higher

(Part II) endorse / initiated / regulations / household / eligible / Taiwan Labor Front / secretary general / relaxing / restrictions / tend to

_____	rules
_____	rules
_____	support
_____	qualified; meet the requirements (to be able to do sth)
_____	family
_____	making easier
_____	chairperson; leader
_____	a workers' organisation; workers union
_____	take care of
_____	started; begun

(Part II) ages / declines / to come up with / measures / tackle / Ministry of the Interior / dilemma

_____	deal with; solve
_____	think of; produce
_____	gets older
_____	a difficult choice (between things that are equally good or bad)
_____	a government department
_____	goes down; becomes less
_____	ideas; ways; strategies

D. Comprehension Questions & Post-Reading Discussion.

1. Why is the government thinking about making it easier for families to hire foreign nannies?
2. Why are some people against the idea of making it easier for families to hire foreign nannies?
3. What is your opinion regarding this issue? Give reasons for your answer.