



# Raising Wisconsin Policy Agenda



**Raising  
Wisconsin**  
Rooted in growth. Invested in children.





# Raising Wisconsin

Rooted in growth. Invested in children.

We believe in a Wisconsin where the health, safety and optimal development of our children is an unwavering priority - the foundation of a promising future.

Together, we will advocate to ensure all families with young children have the resources they need to access affordable, high-quality child care and the tools they need to support their children's optimal health and well-being.

# Wisconsin's Early Care & Education Landscape



Early care and education (ECE) is the foundation of healthy children, families, businesses, communities and a thriving Wisconsin economy. Challenges with the cost and availability of child care significantly impact how Wisconsin parents work, or whether they are able to work at all.

Despite child care's critical nature, decades of limited public investment have created a failing child care market.



Child care, unlike the K-12 education system, is comprised of thousands of regulated, independent small businesses ranging from home-based family providers to large group centers. It is funded predominantly by parent fees, the rates for which are set at what parents are willing and able to pay, not what it costs to run a high-quality program.



A family with the state's median income would use 18.5% of their annual income for child care for one infant. A typical family with two children - an infant and a 4-year-old - would need to spend more than one-third of their annual income to afford child care.



Infant care costs an average of \$12,500 per year with much higher rates in urban areas. Child care costs more than tuition at a four-year University of Wisconsin institution.



There is high turnover in the early childhood workforce, one that is highly educated, skilled and experienced yet earns only poverty-level wages. This is despite nearly half of these professionals having an associate's degree or higher education.



Child care deserts exist across more than 50% of Wisconsin and 70% in rural areas. This means there are more than three children under age five for every licensed available child care slot.



Sources include:

- Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, *The Science of Early Childhood Development*.
- UW-Madison and Institute for Research on Poverty, *Wisconsin Early Care and Education Workforce Executive Summary*.
- Center for American Progress, *Child Care Deserts*.
- Economic Policy Institute, *The Cost of Child Care in the United States*.



# How To Strengthen Wisconsin's Child Care System



**To achieve these priorities, we ask you to support:**

## **Child Care Stabilization**

- Investing dedicated state funds to ensure a stabilized child care industry that promotes Wisconsin's economic growth
- Sustaining the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESN) to stabilize and improve the state's child care sector
- Increasing incentives for child care quality
- Providing assistance to encourage more family child care providers to enter the regulated care system

## **Child Care Professionals**

- Maintaining the expansion of programs that foster the recruitment and retention of the child care workforce
  - » T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Wisconsin (higher education scholarships) and REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program (salary stipends)
  - » Professional development supports to improve the quality of child care

## **Families**

- Creating a refundable child care tax credit package
- Expanding Wisconsin Shares access
  - » Increase Wisconsin Shares child care reimbursement rates
  - » Structure parent co-pays around family's ability to pay
  - » Expand program eligibility to serve more families

## **Businesses and Communities**

- Providing tax credits for businesses that offer employer-sponsored child care
- Sustaining state-matching for employer child care cost sharing



# Creating a Healthy Future for Wisconsin



Optimal physical, mental, social and emotional health of our youngest children and their families is critical in moving toward a future where all are able to thrive. Safe, stable and nurturing parent and caregiver relationships are key to the healthy development of infants and toddlers.



The first five years of life are a time of unparalleled brain development in young children.

Increasingly, the social and emotional needs of infants and young children are recognized as a critical component of school readiness, overall well-being and lifelong success.



Regular well-child visits are critical for infants and toddlers in preventing disease, tracking growth and development,

caregivers raising any concerns and fostering a team approach with strong relationships between families and clinicians.



Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health consultation is an effective collaborative intervention for building parent/caregiver capacity to support

optimal development, enhancing emotional regulation strategies, addressing challenging behaviors and mental health needs of infants and very young children in the context of relationships and across multiple systems of care.



Wisconsin ranks as one of the worst states in the nation for African American infant mortality. Black infants in

Wisconsin die before their first birthday at more than three times the rate of the state's white infants.



At the same time, research shows that doula care is a high-value model that improves childbirth outcomes and increases care quality. This

support during pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period reduces a number of negative outcomes, including prematurity and illness in newborns and the likelihood of postpartum depression in mothers.



Programs that support parents as their child's first and best teacher are effective at enhancing children's language, social-emotional and school-

readiness skills. This is most effective when combined with guidance, education and literacy supports from trusted medical professionals.

Sources include:

- Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, *Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Wisconsin: Best Practice Guidelines*.
- University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, *Addressing the Black Infant Mortality Crisis in Wisconsin*.
- Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health, *The Role of Community-Based Doulas in Improving MCH Outcomes*.
- Reach Out & Read, *The Evidence*.



# How To Build a Foundation of Optimal Well-Being



**To achieve these priorities, we ask you to support:**

## **Mental Health**

- Increasing funding to support infant and early childhood mental health consultation through:
  - » Expanding the clinical workforce to provide infant/early childhood mental health consultation
  - » Creating a statewide directory of qualified infant/early childhood mental health consultants
- Expanding funding for Wisconsin Pyramid Model training and coaching to provide foundational services that enhance the efficiency of mental health services

## **Families**

- Expanding Wisconsin's Family Foundations evidence-based voluntary Home Visiting Program (FFHV) to ensure parents have the supports they need to promote their children's health and development
- Expanding access to doulas for women of color to support their pregnancy and postpartum period to reduce infant mortality
- Increasing state funding for the Birth to 3 Program to support access to high-quality statewide early intervention for children with developmental delays or disabilities
- Strengthening parent-child bonding and relationships for infants and toddlers by expanding the Reach Out and Read program where parents receive guidance and support and children receive books at their well-child checkups





Raising Wisconsin collaborates with organizations, associations and advocacy groups across the state to build a common understanding of the importance of a strong early care and education system and optimal child health and well-being across Wisconsin.

Birth to 3 • Black Child Development Institute Milwaukee • First Five Fox Valley • Healthy Early • The Hmong Institute • Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Education/Hoocak Ee Cooni Waziperes Hocira • Kids Forward • League of Wisconsin Municipalities • Main Street Alliance • Milwaukee Succeeds • Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board • OEM Fabricators • Office of Early Learning Initiatives-City of Milwaukee • One City Schools • Organic Valley • Penfield Children's Center • Platteville Area Industrial Development Cooperation • Prosperity Southwest Wisconsin • Reach Dane/Reach Green • Reach Out and Read Wisconsin • Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative • Supporting Families Together Association • UMOS • United Way of Wisconsin • University of Wisconsin-Madison • University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Wisconsin Partnership Program • Waukesha Community Technical College • Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health • Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities • Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Wisconsin Community Action Program • Wisconsin Council of Churches • Wisconsin Counties Association • Wisconsin Early Childhood Association • Wisconsin Head Start Association • Wisconsin Partners • Wisconsin Philanthropy Network • Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association • Wisconsin Registry • Wisconsin Towns Association



For more information on Raising Wisconsin and its policy agenda, visit: [raisingwisconsin.org](http://raisingwisconsin.org)

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