



Advocacy Toolkit for
**COMMUNITY
LEADERS**





Advocacy Tools for Community Leaders



Community leaders across Wisconsin continue to experience the impact of child care issues and the importance of the optimal health and well-being of our youngest children and their families. Whether you are a health care or mental health professional, education expert, municipal or community group leader or simply an engaged resident, you have the power to share how policy solutions will make a meaningful impact.

It is important to share your unique perspective:

Information on you and your role in the community.

- Where are you employed? Are you a member of community organizations? If so, what are they?
- How do the groups you are affiliated with play an important role in your community?
- How did you develop an awareness of child care access and affordability challenges in your region?

This highlights your credibility as a community leader and illustrates how a variety of interest groups view accessible, affordable child care as a critical tool in allowing communities to thrive.

Your perspective on child care's broad importance.

- How important is child care for developing healthy children?
- How have child care access and affordability issues impacted you, people you know, businesses and/or your community?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted these child care challenges?

This highlights how people from a variety of backgrounds are recognizing the importance of high-quality child care for healthy communities.

It is important to support your statements with data:

ROI of Child Care: There is proven return on investment (ROI) of child care. Research shows high-quality programs for disadvantaged children [can deliver strong ROI](#), including positive outcomes in education, health, social behaviors and employment. This information shows these early investments provide a foundation for the long-term social and economic health of families and communities.

Impact on Parents and Caregivers: Research illustrates how [parents experience many of the challenges](#) facing child care, including accessibility, cost and as a workforce support. This information shows how child care issues existed long before the pandemic but were significantly worsened by the health crisis.

Economic Productivity Losses Due to Child Care: State and [national](#) data highlight how child care issues directly affect economic productivity. This information connects the role of child care as a workforce support and economic development tool in our communities and the state.



Advocacy in Action

How to Craft Impactful Messages

Policymakers want to hear from you, so it is vital that you ensure advocacy messages are clear, meaningful and the most impactful they can be.

No matter how you are communicating with a policymaker, always include:

- Your full name
- Where you live
- Your specific story and why you have a vested interest in the legislation/policy you are advocating for or against.



For Emails or Letters

- **Be concise:** State your reason for contacting the office first.
- **Be specific:** Include the bill number or issue and clearly state your opinion on it and why.
- **Be direct:** Include an ask – call on the legislator to support or oppose the legislation.
- **Be passionate:** Include personal stories and impacts that directly relate to the legislation.
- **Be knowledgeable:** Share relevant supplemental information, like research or news articles that support your ask.

For Phone Calls

- **Be succinct:** Keep your conversation to just 2-3 minutes.
- **Be organized:** Write out notes with your key points before you call to ensure you are prepared and professional.
- **Be direct:** State the reason for your call and your support or opposition to the legislation you are calling about.
- **Be prepared:** If you cannot reach the legislator, ask to speak with an aide. This is just as useful and should not be viewed as a detriment to your advocacy effort.
- **Be appreciative:** Thank them for their time.
- **Be proactive:** Follow up with an e-mail or letter within a few days to reiterate your points and thank them again.



For more information on Raising Wisconsin and its infant toddler policy agenda, visit: raisingwisconsin.org

✉ contact@raisingwisconsin.org

☎ 608.729.1069

A Child Care Email Template for Community Leaders



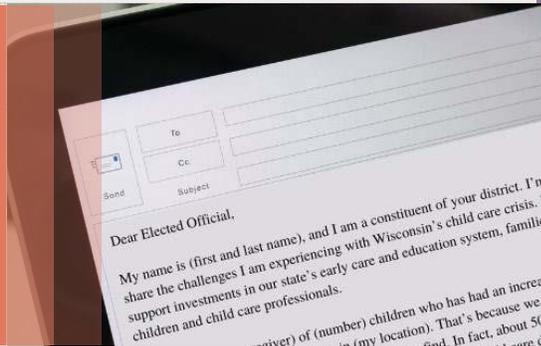
Need a little guidance on how to structure an email or letter for your elected officials?

Use this template as a starting point to hone your message!

Take time to personalize the narrative with your personal information, like where you live, your role in the community (career and/or other relevant organizations) and additional specifics on your local community's challenges with child care.

Stories from community leaders are essential for effective advocacy, and we appreciate you investing your time to share your experiences.

To download this and other email templates in Word document format, please [click here](#).



Dear (Elected Representative),

My name is (first and last name), and I am a constituent of your district. I'm writing today to share the challenges my community is experiencing with Wisconsin's child care crisis. I urge you to support investments in our state's early care and education system, families with young children and child care professionals.

I live, work and am involved in many organizations in (community and/or county). In our area, we see parents and caregivers of young children struggle with the cost and availability of child care, and businesses continue to experience workforce implications as a result. This, of course, leads to a decline in local economic productivity, which contributes to the lasting effect child care challenges have on the state and national economies. It's estimated Wisconsin is set to lose \$4.2 to \$6.4 billion in economic productivity over the long term due to child care.

Child care is essential for the healthy development of our youngest children and, importantly, it's also a critical tool for thriving businesses, economies and our communities. Local efforts are under way to support our child care infrastructure, but we also know strong support from elected officials and public investments is essential for fully addressing the challenges we face.

Thank you in advance for your time, consideration and support of investments into our child care infrastructure.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

(First and Last Name)
(Location)



Wisconsin's Child Care Landscape

Child care is foundational early learning for our youngest children during their most critical developmental period. It's also a vital support for working parents and caregivers and a business and economic tool. Despite being essential and critical, decades of limited public investments have created a failing child care market, which was further damaged by the effects of the pandemic.

So, what exactly is going on and why should you care?



Far too many people can't afford child care.

A median Wisconsin family with one infant will use nearly 1/5 of their annual income for child care. A typical family with an infant and 4-year-old will spend 1/3 of their income on child care.



It ranges from difficult to nearly impossible to find.

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



Early childhood educators are critical yet are paid far too little.

Nearly half of Wisconsin's early childhood educators have some form of higher education but earn an average of \$11 to \$13 an hour while rarely accessing benefits. They are as critical as K-12 public school teachers but many could earn more by seeking an entry-level job in the service industry. This leads to a more than 40% turnover rate for child care professionals.



The child care business model is broken.

Child care programs' budgets are funded predominantly by parent fees and therefore operate on razor-thin margins. Programs do not "make money" off of parents/fees - the money has to support all staff salaries in addition to rent, utilities, food and other necessary operational needs. As a result, programs often cannot offer benefits.



This creates an economic ripple effect.

When families struggle with child care challenges, they are less reliable and effective employees. Some are forced to drop out of the workforce entirely. This affects business productivity and regional and state economies. The long-term economic impact of Wisconsin's child care crisis is estimated at \$4.2 to \$6.4 billion.



For more information on Raising Wisconsin and its infant toddler policy agenda, visit: raisingwisconsin.org

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Sources: Economic Policy Institute. Center for American Progress. Center for the Study for Child Care Employment; Institute for Research on Poverty (Studies of the Wisconsin Early Education Workforce). Bipartisan Policy Center.

A Broken Business Model

Why do parents pay so much and child care professionals make so little?

Consider a Wisconsin scenario: A group child care center...



Open 10 Hours/Day



52 Children



1 Director



5 Lead Teachers



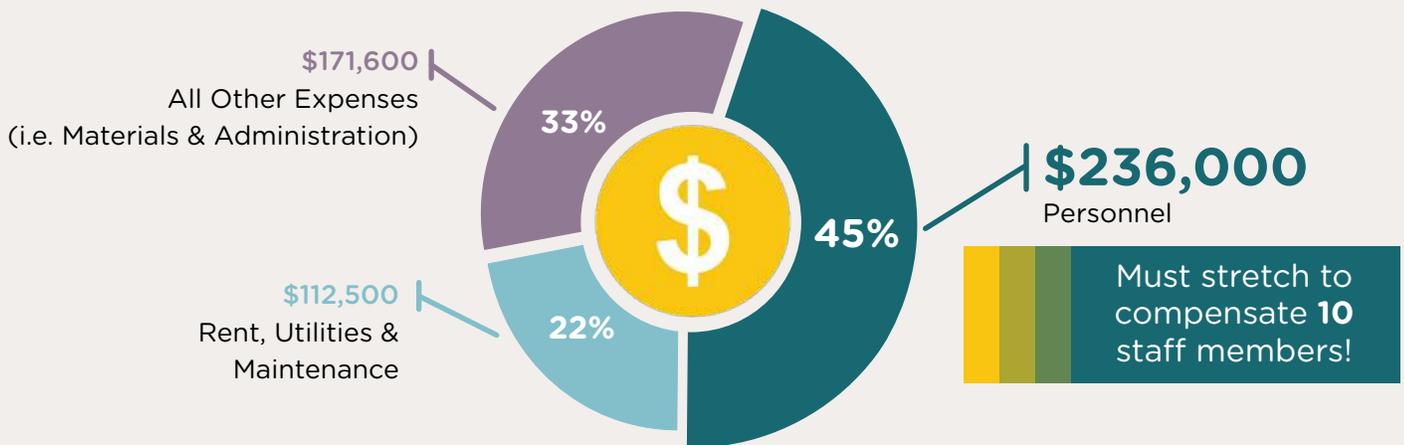
4 Assistant Teachers

...where parents pay an average of \$10,000 per child annually.



The center collects \$520,000 in parent fees.

Center Budget Overview



This means staff members earn an average of \$23,600 a year, or \$11.34 an hour. This does not leave room for standard benefits, like health insurance or retirement contributions.

It's clear: Parent fees alone cannot fund high-quality child care. Change is needed to support early childhood educators with higher wages and benefits, which will reduce the financial burden on parents and caregivers of young children. Significant state and federal investments are needed to support a profession in crisis.

Note: Scenario based on average tuition, space and other direct center expenses for a 3-star regulated Wisconsin program.



Wisconsin's Early Childhood Workforce

Early childhood educators provide foundational early learning for our youngest children during their most critical developmental period. Their work also allows working parents and caregivers to seek and maintain employment, earning child care providers a title of the “workforce behind all other workforces.”

Yet, early educators earn poverty-level wages, many rely on some form of public assistance and they rarely have standard benefits. This leads to high turnover.

Educated, Dedicated & Experienced

- **82%** of early educators have some level of higher education
- **80%** say they work in early care and education because it is their chosen career or profession
- **5 years** average tenure at current program



Poverty-Level Wages & Benefits

- **\$11 to \$13/hour** (center-based teachers); **\$7.46/hour** equivalent (family providers)
- **12%** of center-based teachers do not have any health insurance coverage
- **17%** of center-based teachers receive publicly-funded health insurance (i.e. Medicaid or Medicare)
- **80%** of center-based teachers do not receive health insurance through their employer
- **27%** of center teachers and **20%** of family providers worry every month that their own family's food might run out
- **26%** of center providers and **34%** of family providers receive at least one form of public assistance

High Turnover: Planning to Leave the Field (in next 5 years)

- **66%** of center directors
- **50%** of center teachers
- **37%** of family providers



Sources: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
Institute for Research on Poverty (Studies of the Wisconsin Early Education Workforce).