



Advocacy Toolkit for
**EARLY
CHILDHOOD
PROFESSIONALS**





Advocacy Tools for Early Childhood Professionals



Early childhood professionals are educated, experienced and critical to the optimal development of Wisconsin's youngest children and the economic future of the state in supporting working families. Despite the importance of your role, you likely experience significant challenges, including low pay and lack of access to benefits.

It is important to share your unique perspective:

Your personal story.

- Why did you enter the early care and education field?
- Why are you passionate about your work? If comfortable, sharing your education, experience and how you and your peers are currently compensated also is valuable context.

This highlights the human impact of low compensation and high turnover on you and, by extension, the children and families you serve.

Your experience with the current state of the child care infrastructure.

- What are your struggles and obstacles?
- How are the parents and caregivers you serve impacted by child care challenges?
- How have additional federal funds impacted your work and assisted you in your day-to-day work?

This highlights a connection between your first-hand perspective with the child care sector's importance for child development and in supporting parents' ability to work and allowing the economy to flourish.

It is important to support your statements with data:

2021 Study Findings on the State of Wisconsin's Early Childhood Workforce: The [executive summary](#) and reports on survey data from [Program Directors](#), [Center-Based Teachers](#) and [Family Child Care Providers](#) cover ECE wages, benefits and turnover, among other key results. The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association also published a [Recommendations Brief](#) based on the study's key findings. This information provides the research and recommendations that support your lived experiences.

Child Care's Impact on Workforce Participation: Numerous research pieces and news articles highlight the importance of the ECE workforce as the "workforce behind the workforce," providing care for children while their families and caregivers work. This information illustrates [the economic ripple effect](#) impacting families - particularly women - when child care remains unaffordable and inaccessible.



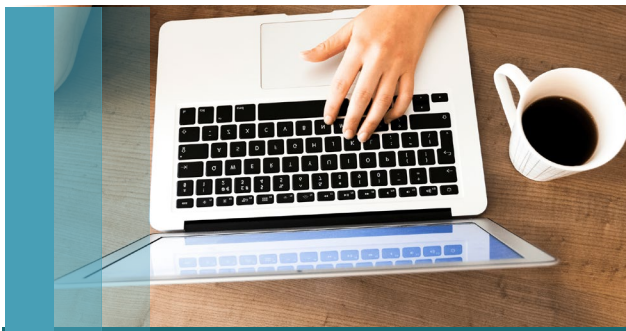
Advocacy in Action

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 Early Childhood Professionals



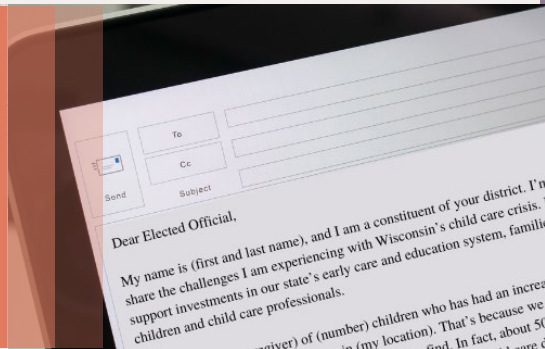
Need a little guidance on how to structure an email or letter for your elected officials?

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

Take time to personalize the narrative with your personal information, like where you work and live, your education and wages you earn, child care program structure and other specifics on your experience in the early care and education workforce you'd like to share.

Stories from early childhood professionals are essential for effective advocacy, and we appreciate you investing your time to share your experiences and expertise.

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 I am experiencing with Wisconsin's child care crisis as an early childhood educator. I urge you to support investments in our state's early care and education system to support child care professionals, families with young children and the state and national economies.

I have worked in early care and education for (X years) and (insert education/degrees/etc.). Despite being educated and skilled in education and child development, I only earn (insert wages/benefits information). Early childhood educators throughout Wisconsin average \$11 to \$13 an hour while rarely having access to benefits, a longtime trend that requires public investment to support this incredibly vital workforce.

(Share about your experience throughout the pandemic, the pandemic's effects on your program and colleagues, including the number of closed classrooms due to staffing shortages. Add information about how pandemic relief funding supported programs in staying open and staff compensated.)

This illustrates the importance of long-term state and federal investments in child care because we are approaching a fiscal cliff at the end of this vital relief funding. The last two-plus years have clearly illustrated we cannot afford to return to the pre-pandemic under-resourcing of early care and education.

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

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.



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Sources: Economic Policy Institute. Center for American Progress. Center for the Study of 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?

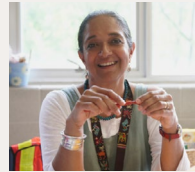
Consider a Wisconsin scenario: A group child care center...



Open 10 Hours/Day



52 Children



1 Director

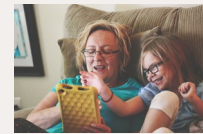


5 Lead Teachers



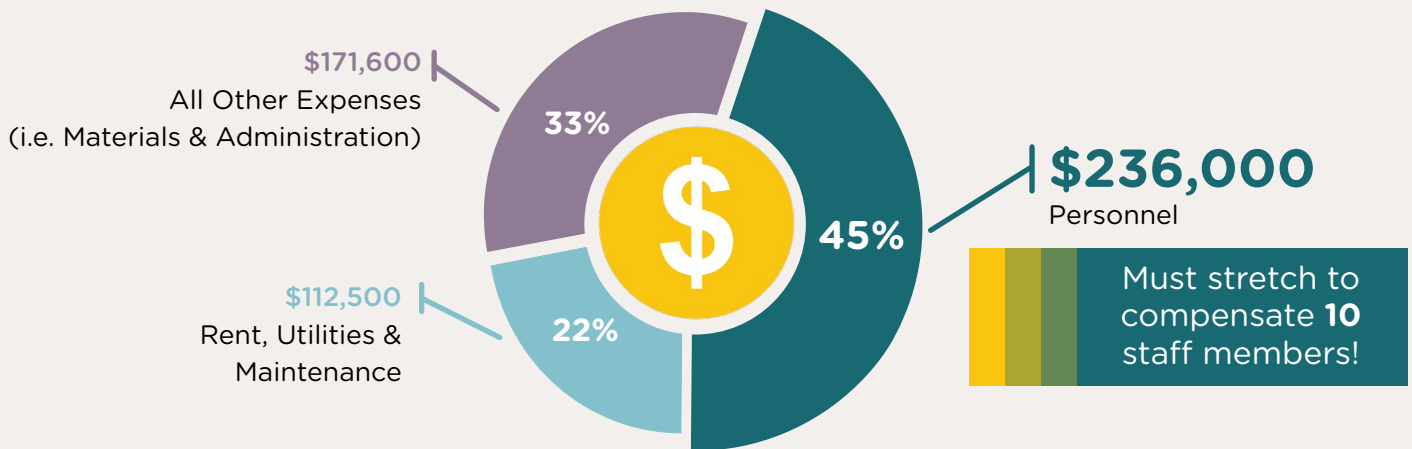
4 Assistant Teachers

...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).