



# Advocacy Toolkit for **FAMILIES**



# Advocacy Tools for Families



Parents, families and caregivers of young children take the brunt of the “perfect storm” that is the child care crisis – availability issues, unaffordable options and the impact on work and career. You know first hand how affordable, accessible child care positively impacts your ability to be a reliable, productive employee, and how vital child care is for the optimal, healthy development of the children you care about.

## It is important to share your unique perspective:

### Information on you, your family and child care access.

- How many children do you have and how old are they?
- Do you send your children to child care? If you are comfortable, share the cost of the care you receive and how much that cost impacts your household budget.
- If you do not send your child/children to child care because of availability issues or cost, detail how that influences your career.

This highlights a first-person perspective and provides a human face to the cost and availability of child care in your community and region.

### Your experience with child care’s impact on work and career.

- How often have you experienced work absences due to child care challenges?
- How has this impacted your productivity and reliability as an employee?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced your experience with child care?

This highlights a first-person perspective and provides a human face to child care challenges, both before and during the pandemic.

## It is important to support your statements with data:

**Cost of Care:** Child care is one of the single highest expenses for Wisconsin parents and caregivers of young children. A typical family in Wisconsin would have to spend more than [one-third of its income](#) on care for an infant and 4-year-old.

**Child Care Deserts:** Approximately 50% of Wisconsin, including 70% in the state’s rural areas, are in [“child care deserts.”](#) where there are more than three children under age 5 for every licensed available child care slot. This interactive map provides a visual of child care scarcity and a tool to show impact in your specific community.

**Child Care’s Impact on Workforce Participation:** Research and news articles have illustrated how workforce participation is highly influenced by child care access, particularly for working mothers. This information highlights [the economic ripple effect](#) particularly impacting women when child care remains unaffordable and inaccessible.

**Working Wisconsin Mothers:** Data shows [70.2% of Wisconsin’s infants](#) have mothers in the workforce, which is nearly 10% higher than the national average. This illustrates how addressing child care issues enable working mothers to maintain employment and, by extension, influence the state’s economic productivity.





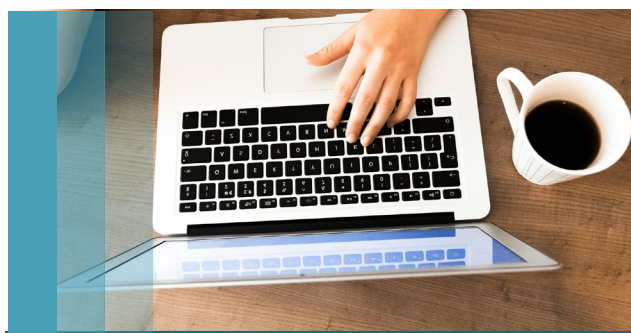
# Advocacy in Action

## 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](http://raisingwisconsin.org)

✉ [contact@raisingwisconsin.org](mailto:contact@raisingwisconsin.org)

☎ 608.729.1069

# A Child Care Email Template for Families



## 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 the location where you live, your family structure (i.e. number of children) and other specifics on availability, cost and workforce implications you're comfortable sharing.

Stories from families 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 I am 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 am a (parent or caregiver) of (number) children who has had an increasingly difficult time finding child care in our area here in (my location). That's because we live in an area where care is scarce and therefore nearly impossible to find. In fact, about 50 percent of the state, and 70 percent of Wisconsin's rural areas, are considered child care deserts.

Care is not only difficult to find but it's also extremely costly. We pay (\$\$\$\$\$) a year for child care. This puts a strain on an already tight budget, especially in times of other increasing costs and economic challenges.

I have considered whether it makes more fiscal sense to leave my job to stay home to care for my children rather than sending them to child care. This also is a choice many other families are forced to consider. Of course, this continued trend impacts our state and national economies - in Wisconsin to the tune of \$4.2 to \$6.4 billion in estimated lost economic productivity over the long term.

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.



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✉ [contact@raisingwisconsin.org](mailto:contact@raisingwisconsin.org)

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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.*



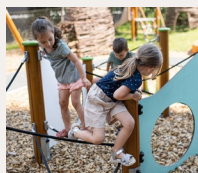
# A Broken Business Model

## 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

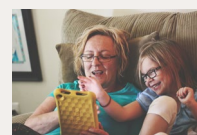
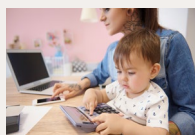


5 Lead Teachers



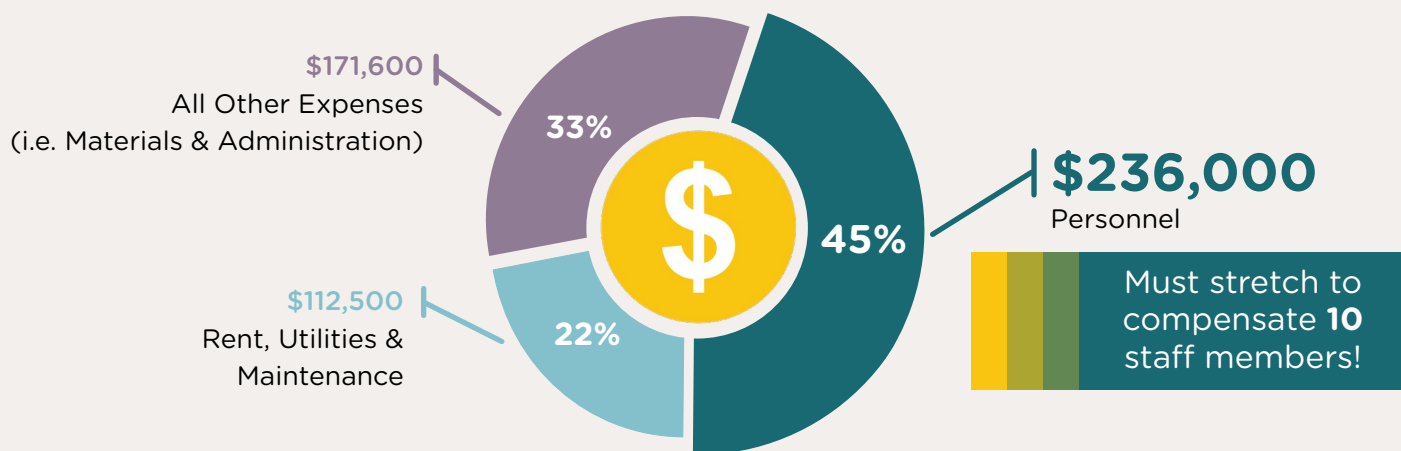
4 Assistant Teachers

**...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).