

# Raising Wisconsin Child Care 2023-25 State Budget Request Key Talking Points

## The Budget Ask

Raising Wisconsin calls for the state Legislature to prioritize child care in the 2023-25 biennium by investing \$300 million to continue the Child Care Counts Program.

## Background of Child Care Counts

- Child Care Counts has been critically important, especially during the effects of COVID-19. It was funded through federal pandemic relief dollars allocated by the state. That relief funding expires in January 2024. The result of a looming fiscal cliff.
- Child Care Counts provides direct support to child care programs – payments can be used toward operating expenses and early educator wage supplements.
- Even with significant relief funding, programs still struggle to find and retain staff and remain at a critical breaking point. Without financial support, programs would have been forced to close or reduce their availability at even higher rates.

## Wisconsin's Child Care Landscape

- Families struggle to find and maintain care – the state is 50% child care deserts, 70% in rural areas.
- Unaffordable for families, sometimes taking up to 1/3 of a family's annual income.
- Programs operate on razor-thin margins with budgets balanced on parent fees, which don't cover the cost of providing high-quality care.
- The result is low compensation for child care professionals.

## Tell Your Story

- **Early Childhood Professionals/Programs:** When talking to legislators on the importance of a strong investment in child care, it's important to share if you've received Child Care Counts and how those funds were spent. It could be as simple as, "I received \$XXXX of Child Care Counts and have used those funds to \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. increase my staff's salaries). We are in a staffing crisis – Child Care Counts is vital to keep classrooms open."
- **Parents:** When talking to legislators on the importance of a strong investment in child care, it's important to share your experience with the challenge of finding child care/availability challenges in your local community. This will draw the connection between your experience as a parent/caregiver and the importance of Child Care Counts, which supports programs and child care providers/professionals.
- **Employers & Economic Leaders:** When talking to legislators about the importance of a strong investment in child care, it's important to share your experience with child care's impact on and connection with finding reliable, effective employees who are working parents. You can discuss business productivity challenges, how this is impacting your broader community, and how child care challenges influence the overall economic growth of the state.