

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Feb. 16, 2023

For more information, contact:

Ruth Schmidt, WECA Executive Director | 608-729-1042 | ruschmidt@wisconsinearlychildhood.org

Cassie Perenchio, Communications Director | 608-230-8000 | cperenchio@wisconsinearlychildhood.org

Raising Wisconsin praises Governor's commitment to child care, health and well-being in Executive Budget

Raising Wisconsin appreciates Gov. Tony Evers' continued commitment to young children and families highlighted in the child care and health and well-being-focused priorities announced yesterday in the Executive Budget.

Evers' proposed state investment into child care, including more than \$300 million to fund the Child Care Counts program, is critical as the state faces a looming January 2024 fiscal cliff when federal pandemic relief funding in support of early care and education will expire. The governor's proposal marks a significant and historic moment for Wisconsin, which has never placed this resounding an emphasis on early childhood as a budget priority.

Raising Wisconsin, a statewide advocacy campaign powered by a broad multi-sector coalition, has been advocating for significant funding for Child Care Counts as part of its child care goals and priorities. The coalition's health and well-being priorities include expansion of home visiting programs and significant investment in infant mental health.

The Executive Budget provides a strong investment in evidence-based home-visiting initiatives, which will allow more Wisconsin families to access critical programs, such as Nurse-Family Partnership, that are proven to improve outcomes for children and parents. Additionally, the Governor's plan to invest in mental and behavioral health services underscores the high level of need the state is experiencing, partly as a result of the pandemic that denied babies, toddlers, and preschoolers normative developmental experiences, which are essential for lifelong health and success.

"We are thrilled to see these steps being taken," said Ruth Schmidt, executive director of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, which leads the Raising Wisconsin initiative. "The proposed child care investment is as essential as it is historic for our state. We look forward to the rest of the budget process and working together with legislators and policymakers from both parties to support young children, families, early childhood educators, and our communities."

Raising Wisconsin also appreciates the Governor's recognition of the importance of postpartum Medicaid extension for moms and babies, as the coalition knows it will be critical for optimal health and well-being and addressing disparities.

"The coalition looks forward to working with policymakers to advance meaningful supports for early childhood, health, young children, families, and the economic and social health of the state moving forward," said Jackie Anderson, Director of Raising Wisconsin.

###

Raising Wisconsin is an advocacy initiative powered by nearly 50 organizations and partners from across Wisconsin who are working together to advocate for investments into young children and families with focuses on early care and education and optimal health and well-being. It brings together child care professionals, families, business leaders, economic officials, and community leaders. For more information on Raising Wisconsin, visit www.raisingwisconsin.org. Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA), founded in 1971, is a state nonprofit organization that supports the early childhood workforce and early care and education in Wisconsin. For more information on WECA, visit www.wisconsinearlychildhood.org.