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Raising Wisconsin thanks Gov. Evers for commitment to early childhood, families through funding for Child Care Counts

Raising Wisconsin applauds Gov. Tony Evers' allocation of \$170 million in available pandemic relief funding to continue Child Care Counts payments through June 2025, a measure which will provide some stability and welcome relief to the early childhood field that has been struggling while planning for the original anticipated end of the program in January.

"This is an incredibly amazing development for child care providers and programs," said Jackie Anderson, Director of Raising Wisconsin. "It represents some relief for programs that were grappling with raising parent fees and possibly closing their doors. We appreciate the Governor's leadership on child care and willingness to step up to support providers and working families through this action."

Raising Wisconsin, a statewide advocacy campaign powered by a broad multi-sector coalition, has been continuing to advocate for significant funding for Child Care Counts as part of its policy priorities. The \$170 million as a result of Evers' action will allow programs to continue at their current level of reduced payments. While the continuation of payments at the lower level is incredibly necessary and beneficial, it still is not enough to provide the level of funding and sustainability needed over the long term to ensure stability for providers, parents, employers, and communities across Wisconsin.

It is important to note that the Governor's action comes just as new state surplus figures were announced, which show Wisconsin will end the year with a more than \$7 billion in available surplus. Raising Wisconsin's original ask of \$300 million to continue the Child Care Counts Program would represent a mere 4 percent of that surplus. In short, state Legislators have the funding available to provide a significant investment of general purpose revenue into payments for child care programs over the long term.

"Today's news is incredibly welcome news for child care professionals whose expertise and dedication deserved to be recognized, and represents some possible relief for working parents who also deserve support," Anderson said. "It is also important to note the early childhood field has, for a long time, needed long-term investment and will continue to need it."

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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.