Access to Child Care in Wisconsin
Speakers: Jackie Anderson, Director of Raising Wisconsin, WI Early Childhood Association;
Ruth Schmidt, Executive Director, WI Early Childhood Association
Moderator: Hope Otto, Human Services Director, Racine County
Child Care Access and Investing in Wisconsin’s Future
Ruth Schmidt, WECA Executive Director

Jackie Anderson, Director of Raising Wisconsin

Wisconsin
WECA
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Raising Wisconsin
Child Care Cost

Wisconsin family with one infant
1/5 (20%) of their annual income

Typical family with an infant and 4-year-old
1/3 (33%) of their annual income

Source: Economic Policy Institute
Child Care Availability

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 5 for every licensed child care slot.

Source: Center for American Progress
A Broken Business Model and Failed Market

Child care programs’ budgets are funded predominantly by parent fees.

Programs operate on razor-thin margins.

Early educators receive low wages and rarely have access to standard benefits.
Workforce and Economic Impact

Child care professionals are the workforce behind all other workforces.

Child care is an economic engine and necessary for functioning, profitable businesses.
Workforce Implications

83% of employers say Wisconsin businesses will face workforce shortages now and in the future without affordable child care.

Women’s Workforce Participation

Women in Wisconsin have consistently worked at rates above the national rate, but the advantage is shrinking. In 2022, Wisconsin’s women’s labor force participation dipped below 60% for the first time since the late 1980s.

Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), State of Working Wisconsin 2023
Annual Economic Impact

$1.9 BILLION

in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.

Source: Council for a Strong America
Counties Invest and Engage in Child Care Efforts

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Investments
- DreamUp! Grants
- Child Care Taskforces
Where Do We Go From Here?

Your local efforts are important. Those efforts must be paired with advocacy for significant state investment. The voices of local and regional community leaders are essential in this work.
2023-25 State Budget and Child Care Advocacy
Raising Wisconsin’s Child Care Advocacy Campaign

- Nearly 100,000 Letters
- Record-setting Child Care Advocacy Day
- A Day Without Child Care social blitz
- Business/employer sign-on letter (100 signers)
- Webinars on the business case for state investment
- Employer-legislator child care forums
The Ask: $300 Million to Continue Child Care Counts

Despite these significant and record-setting efforts, the Legislature voted against providing any funding to continue Child Care Counts past January 2024.
What Does This Mean for Your Community?

More than half of Wisconsinites live in child care desert, system in desperate need of help

Business executives make case for investment in child care programs

86% of program directors/owners say they have or will increase parent fees

47% of early educators are considering leaving the field

32% of program directors/owners may close their doors

Source: WECA Child Care Counts Impact Survey, 2023
In Their Words: Impact on the Early Childhood Field

“It is so disappointing and frustrating to be in this field with no respect or regard for what we do. We were considered ‘essential’ to keep the Wisconsin economy going during covid. We are a key ‘community asset’ when communities are trying to get more industry and commerce into their communities, but legislators don't see that.”
-Provider, Ozaukee County

“I am one of the least costly programs around. I will need to increase my rates AND take a pay cut or risk losing my staff and therefore turn children away.”
-Provider, Washington County

Source: WECA Child Care Counts Impact Survey, 2023
“The grants helped give teachers a wage increase to $18 per hour. No tuition increase. What would you do? Cut wages - employee leaves. Raise tuition - parents leave. This is a no-win solution. The only outcome would be closing. Please step up and keep these businesses continuing to operate.”

-Provider, Brown County

“Without the childcare counts we will be forced to raise prices and therefore become unaffordable to many families we serve.”

-Provider, Green County

Source: WECA Child Care Counts Impact Survey, 2023
Let’s Really Think About Affordability

“After funding was reduced, our child care center was forced to raise rates by $30 per week in order to maintain their wonderful staff and keep their doors open. The extra $120 per month is a large expense. We have been accruing credit card debt to pay for groceries and student loan debt to pay for child care while I am in school. Subsidized child care and child care funding would greatly help my family to ensure my daughter is safe and receives a good education while I attend school in order to improve my family's financial future.”

-Erica, Parent from La Crosse

Source: Raising Wisconsin Share Your Story Form
Family Budget Impact: Chippewa County

-$655

$238

It’s the end of the month and you’re a working family with young children. How much do you have left over after paying for basic expenses and child care?

Source: Affordability Calculator: Early Learning Policy Group & WECA
Family Budget Impact: Sheboygan County

It’s the end of the month and you’re a working family with young children. How much do you have left over after paying for basic expenses and child care?

-$690

$263

Source: Affordability Calculator: Early Learning Policy Group & WECA
Family Budget Impact: Racine County

It’s the end of the month and you’re a working family with young children. How much do you have left over after paying for basic expenses and child care?

Source: Affordability Calculator: Early Learning Policy Group & WECA
It’s the end of the month and you’re a working family with young children. How much do you have left over after paying for basic expenses and child care?

Source: Affordability Calculator: Early Learning Policy Group & WECA
Child Care “Affordability”

Scan this code to visit a child care cost/affordability calculator. You can see what a family experiences in your home county.

Source: Early Learning Policy Group & WECA
In Their Words: Parent Perspective

“Child care is already expensive. Asking families to carry more of a burden when there are options to help and support them is insanity.”

-Parent from Dodge County

Source: WECA Child Care Counts Impact Survey, 2023
What Is Necessary to Support the Child Care Sector?
Thank you.
Questions?

RUTH SCHMIDT
WECA Executive Director
Email: ruschmidt@wisconsinearlychildhood.org

JACKIE ANDERSON
Director of Raising Wisconsin
Email: janderson@wisconsinearlychildhood.org

Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
2908 Marketplace Drive, Suite 101
Fitchburg, WI 53719
Phone: 800-783-9322
Office: 608-240-9880
Fax: 877-248-7662

www.wisconsinearlychildhood.org/