

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.