

# 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.

# Raising Wisconsin

## Optimal Health and Well-Being 2023-25 State Budget Request

### Key Talking Points

Raising Wisconsin calls for the state Legislature to prioritize children's health and well-being in the **2023-25 biennium by:**

#### **Supporting young children's mental health - \$8.79 million to support and enhance training and coaching, Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, and endorsement work.**

- Early investments are proven to pay dividends long into adulthood.
- The pandemic significantly worsened mental and physical health challenges of young children and families.
- People of all ages, including infants, experience mental health challenges. No one is too young, including infants and young children.
- If untreated, challenges start early, worsen, and create roadblocks for learning, social competence and difficult behaviors (i.e. aggression and bullying, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal).
- Challenging behaviors are the No. 1 reason children and families are asked to leave a child care program.

#### **Expanding Family Foundations Home Visiting Programs - \$10 million to increase counties served and number of home visitors.**

- Home Visiting is evidence-based and completely voluntary.
- It links pregnant women with prenatal care, and new mothers receive tools to promote strong parent-child attachment and activities, which foster their child's development and their role as their first and most important teacher.
- Proven to foster educational development and school-readiness and play a role in preventing child abuse and neglect over the long-term.

#### **Extending Medicaid coverage to 12 months in the postpartum period.**

- The current mandate covers mothers for 60 days while their babies are covered for a year.
- Medicaid extension reduces maternal and infant mortality and decreases uninsured rates for pregnant and new moms.
- Wisconsin has an infant mortality crisis. The state's Black babies are three times more likely to die before their first birthday than white babies.