



**Raising  
Wisconsin**

**Advocacy  
Toolkit:  
Early  
Childhood  
Professionals**





## Putting Advocacy into Action

As an early childhood professional, you are educated, dedicated, and experienced, and you know your work is critical for educating Wisconsin's youngest children and driving the state's economy.

Elected officials need to hear your story.

### Getting Ready to Advocate

#### Know Who Represents You

It's essential to know who represents you, particularly at the state level. Visit Wisconsin's [MyVote online resource](#) to identify your state representative and senator, find your polling place, and receive general voting information, including absentee deadlines.

#### Be Informed

Review the [child care landscape resources](#) on Raising Wisconsin's website to help tailor your advocacy messages with data, background, and other key facts about the challenges early educators, families, employers, and communities face. These facts and data will help you craft your story.

#### Tips for Effective Communication

- **Be concise:** State your reason for having the conversation.
- **Be specific:** State the issue and clearly share your opinion and the reasons for it. When possible, share information like how many children your program serves, how long you've worked in early care and education, and how child care challenges affect you, your program, your family, and your community.
- **Be direct:** Include an ask – and call on the legislator to support or oppose.
- **Be passionate:** Include personal stories and experiences that directly relate to the legislation.
- **Be knowledgeable:** Share relevant information, like research, data, and/or news articles that support the ask.

#### Prepare and Practice Your 'Elevator Speech'

You never know when you might have the opportunity to share your story with state legislators. This is especially true when they are not in session in Madison and are back in their home districts when they attend local events – parades, county fairs, dairy breakfasts – and could even be someone you run into while you're shopping. During campaign seasons, you could get a knock on your door from candidates running for office.

That's why always having your "elevator speech" ready is so important. You never know when you might have the opportunity to share it face to face.

## Engagement Strategies and Opportunities

### Make Phone Calls

Give your legislators a call. In 2-3 minutes, you can share with a staffer or the elected official themselves the challenges you face and why investing in child care is so necessary. If you don't speak to a person, leaving a message with the encouragement to call back is a great way to show you're invested in the issue.

### Visit Your Legislators

Making a personal visit to the Capitol is a fantastic way to signal the importance of an investment in child care. Contact the legislative office, speak with a staffer, and set up a time to visit to discuss experiences you are having in your home community, which they represent. Legislators have full calendars, so it's important to make the visit brief and be prepared with your elevator speech.

### Organize Local Events

Our engagement team can help you with resources to organize and facilitate local events that highlight the importance of state investment into child care. Contact us for more information.

### Child Care Program Visits

You can bring together state elected officials, parents, and community leaders at your child care program to have a conversation about child care challenges and the need for state support.

### Celebrate Days of Action

Hosting local events that celebrate state and national days of action is a great way to put a spotlight on child care. Raise awareness at your program and in your community during Week of the Young Child (April), Worthy Wage Day (May), or A Day Without Child Care (May).

### Provide a Tour

Invite your elected officials to tour your program. They can ask questions of you one to one. You can explain how your finances work, what types of families you serve and share your own story.

### Attend Events

Maybe organizing an event isn't quite for you – and that's OK! You can watch for local and state events and attend them to show your support for child care.

### Program Visits and Days of Action

If the child care program where you work or another local program is hosting state and local officials or celebrating days of action, attend them if they have an open invitation. Your perspective and participation is valuable!

### State Capitol Advocacy Day

Raising Wisconsin, WECA, and organizational partners host a biannual advocacy day at the state Capitol where the goal is to meet with as many state legislators as possible to advocate during a critical time in the state budget development process. The more people who attend, the more we can show the importance of investing in child care. The event typically also includes a training so you will feel prepared to participate in site visits and share your story.



## Send Letters

### Digital Portal

The easiest way to send a letter to your state representative and senator is through [Raising Wisconsin's automated portal](#)! Put in your name and contact information and the system makes sure your officials receive the letter. You can use the pre-populated text and and/or add some of your experiences and perspective to personalize it if you choose.

### Craft Your Own Message

Sometimes sending a direct, more personalized letter – either via email or hard-copy mail – is helpful. Find your legislators' contact information on the [Legislature's website](#) and send it with the encouragement for them to contact you for a follow-up conversation.

### Submit a Letter to the Editor

Letters you write to elected officials can be easily adapted for a broader public audience and sent to local, regional, or state news outlets as letters to the editor.

### Stay Informed

Sign up for our [Advocacy Digest and Alerts e-newsletter](#), a great source of calls to action, events, research, news stories, and more!

Bookmark [WECA's Upcoming Events](#) page for the latest opportunities to attend in-person and virtual engagement events.

Follow [Raising Wisconsin](#) and [WECA](#) on social media! Check us out on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.



For more information on Raising Wisconsin, current advocacy efforts, and policy priorities, visit: [www.raisingwisconsin.org](http://www.raisingwisconsin.org).

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Raising Wisconsin is powered by a multi-sector coalition led by Wisconsin Early Childhood Association.