



September 18, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

The growing crisis in Child Care / Early Care and Education (ECE) can only be solved by substantial financial support by the state of Wisconsin. The COVID pandemic has shown ECE programs are the foundation needed to ensure a strong workforce across Wisconsin. We in ECE have been asked to go over and above our **normal** during the COVID pandemic. We have stepped up and provided care for essential workers. With school starting, we are again asked to step up and provide care for children in part-time face-to-face public school programs as well as being the **support team** for virtual school through our programs both on-site and off-site.

During this crisis, we were subsidized through the CARES grants, which helped temporarily stabilize our workforce and purchase PPE supplies. Unfortunately, the CARES grant did not guarantee staff retention. These funds are only a temporary band aid to address the larger problem of maintaining and growing early care and education programs across the state.

The majority of early care programs are administered by women, whom the majority are also small businesses. Sec. Amundson stated 40% of early care programs closed initially during COVID, 20% are still closed, this in addition to the early care programs that had closed before the crises amount to a substantial loss of ECE slots across the state. Sources across the world agree, education begins at birth, not when a child walks through the door of a public or private school. We all agree the cost of early care is higher than annual college tuition. As a result, early care programs provide care for the upper-middle class families and the low-income subsidized families. The middle-middle class is priced out of early care.

The Preschool Development Grant is looking for ways to make early care more **Affordable** and **Accessible** for Wisconsin families, as well as stabilizing the Early Care **Workforce**. The Pritzker Grant is focusing on increasing Infant slots across Wisconsin.

The solution is to financially invest in the early care **Workforce**, which would result in:

- ECE programs lowering fees making care **Affordably** for all families.
- The early care **Workforce**, many of which are degreed Teachers, would be paid wages comparable to other Bachelor and Associate degreed occupations.
- Increased ECE **Accessibility** for families, through a stable workforce, will open early care slots and encourage growth in early care programs across Wisconsin.
- **Workforce**/staff turnover would decrease encouraging existing ECE programs to expand and new programs to develop.

All the current programs established by DCF to provide funding to early care programs are temporary, not long-term solutions to solving the problems in Early Care and Education programs across the state which is documented in the growing "child care deserts".

Please review the attached, "Early Care Reality" paper to understand the challenges ECE faces daily.

Sincerely,
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