

Main Street Alliance: Reacts to Dept. of Children and Families announcement of enhanced SHARES subsidy and support for families

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MADISON- Main Street Alliance of Wisconsin is *thrilled* by the **announcement** by the Department of Children and Families that they will be making investments to help support providers and families in hugely meaningful ways.

First, the department is providing financial incentives to providers who are offering **non traditional hours**. One of the largest barriers for workers, **especially mothers**, reentering the workforce is the lack of affordable, quality and flexible child care options. This directly addresses that and will increase access to slots at a time that works for families.

Second, it is dramatically **increasing support** for working families through the Wisconsin SHARES program from 35 to 80 percent of the cost of care. The average cost for infant care in Wisconsin is \$12,597, according to the **Economic Policy Institute** so for an eligible family with one child they would see a savings of \$5,669 *per year*.

“The pandemic has highlighted how important access to high-quality, affordable child care is to Wisconsin families, as well as our state’s economy,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “It also highlighted a looming crisis in the child care industry. This program, along with other upcoming initiatives, will help us stabilize beyond the pandemic by growing and sustaining child care providers that meet the needs of Wisconsin’s working families.”

Last week, MSA member Daniel Swenson-Klatt testified to the Joint Economic Committee in Congress about the impact of child care on small business.

“My applicant pool is severely limited by access and affordability to high-quality child care. I need a level playing field to allow employees with children who’d love to work in customer service settings be able to afford and easily access a child care center or family child care program. But as things stand now, those staff members with children work limited hours,” writes Swenson-Klatt.

Patrick DePula, owner of Salvatore’s Tomato Pies and Dark Horse Art Bar adds: “

Along with that, child care assistance “is sorely needed,” he adds, as well as better pay for child care workers.

“I think a lot of people will look at these sorts of things as entitlements,” DePula says. “But we’re just enabling the economy to continue to grow by removing barriers to entrepreneurship.”

One of the best actions the state can take to help small business is to support child care providers and families to remove an important barrier. This plan will do that and we look forward to working with the Department of Children and Families and our partners to ensure a *smooth implementation*.

We are hopeful for the robust investments in child care included in the Build Back Better plan; however, with passage it will take time to implement those changes.

In the meantime it is great to see the Department of Children and Families, under the leadership of Gov. Tony Evers and Secretary Emilie Amundson, taking decisive action to help Wisconsin Families and small businesses.