

Opportunity Wisconsin: Statement on U.S. House passing the Build Back Better Act

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MADISON, Wis.—Today Opportunity Wisconsin released the following statement after the U.S. House of Representatives successfully passed the Build Back Better Act.

Meghan Roh, Opportunity Wisconsin program director:

“Hardworking elected leaders here in Wisconsin and in the Biden-Harris administration are delivering for the Badger State by passing the Build Back Better Act. These reforms will level the playing field for working people by lowering costs for health insurance, bringing down prescription drug prices, reducing energy bills, and making child care more affordable. Today we’re calling on Senator Ron Johnson to put politics aside and pass a historic bill that will put the people of Wisconsin back to work and make sure the rich and big corporations pay their fair share.”

[The Build Back Better Act will deliver for Wisconsin by:](#)

- **Delivering the largest investment in child care and early education in history.**
 - **Provide access to affordable child care.** Child care is a major strain for families in Wisconsin, where the average annual cost of a child care center for a toddler is \$10,332, meaning that a Wisconsin family with two young children would on average spend 20% of their income on child care for one year. The lack of affordable options also makes it difficult for parents, and especially mothers, to remain in their jobs, contributing to the 17% gender gap in workforce participation between mothers and fathers in Wisconsin. The Build Back Better Act would enable Wisconsin to

provide access to child care for 359,321 young children (ages 0-5) per year from families earning under 2.5 times the state median income (about \$239,433 for a family of 4), and ensure these families pay no more than 7% of their income on high-quality child care.

- **Provide universal, high-quality, free preschool for every 3- and 4-year old in America.** Today, only 29% of the 119,793 3- and 4-year-olds in Wisconsin have access to publicly-funded preschool, and it costs about \$8,600 per year for those who can't access a publicly-funded program. The Build Back Better Act would enable Wisconsin to expand access to free, high-quality preschool to more than 84,748 additional 3- and 4-year-olds per year and increase the quality of preschool for children who are already enrolled. Parents will be able to send their children to the preschool setting of their choice—from public schools to child care providers to Head Start—leading to lifelong educational benefits, allowing more parents to go back to work, and building a stronger foundation for Wisconsin's future economic competitiveness.
- **Cut taxes and reduce some of the largest expenses for workers and families.**
 - **Cut taxes for families and workers.** Prior to the pandemic, 8% of children under the age of 18 in Wisconsin lived in poverty. The Build Back Better Act would bolster financial security and spur economic growth in Wisconsin by reducing taxes on the middle class and those striving to break into it. The bill would extend Child Tax Credit (CTC) increases of \$300/month per child under 6 or \$250/month per child ages 6 to 17. This would continue the largest one-year reduction in child poverty in history. And critically, the agreement includes permanent refundability for the Child Tax Credit, meaning that the neediest families will continue to receive the full Child Tax Credit over the long-run. The bill also provides a tax cut of up to \$1,500 in tax cuts for 304,000 low-wage workers in Wisconsin by extending the American Rescue Plan's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) expansion.
 - **Expand health care coverage and lower costs.** Health care should be a right, not a privilege, and residents of Wisconsin facing illness should never have to worry about how they are going to pay for treatment. The Build Back Better Act would close the Medicaid coverage gap to help millions of Americans gain health insurance, extend through 2025 the American Rescue Plan's health insurance premium reductions for those who buy coverage on their own, and help older Americans access

affordable hearing care by expanding Medicare. In Wisconsin, that means 39,000 uninsured people will gain coverage and 51,900 will on average save hundreds of dollars per year. In addition, the Build Back Better Act would support maternal health and invest in national preparedness for future pandemics.

- **Make education beyond high school more affordable and accessible.** The average cost of a 2-year degree in Wisconsin is \$4,661 per year, and \$9,162 per year for a 4-year degree, straining many student budgets. To help unlock the opportunities of an education beyond high school, the Build Back Better Act would increase maximum Pell Grant awards by \$550 for students at public and private non-profit institutions, supporting the 78,304 students in Wisconsin who rely on Pell. The bill also invests in Wisconsin's 5 minority-serving institutions and the students they serve, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs).
- **Reduce housing costs and expand housing options.** 327,000 renters in Wisconsin are rent burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent, while homeownership remains out of reach for many families. The Build Back Better Act would expand rental assistance for Wisconsin renters, while also increasing the supply of high-quality housing through the construction and rehabilitation of over 1 million affordable housing units nationwide. It would address the capital needs of the entire public housing stock in America and it includes one of the largest investments in down payment assistance in history, enabling more first-generation homebuyers to purchase their first home.