

Wisconsin Early Childhood Association: Statement on Gov. Evers' proposed use of federal stimulus funding for Wisconsin's child care infrastructure

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Madison, Wisconsin | March 4, 2021: The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association commends Governor Evers and Department of Children and Families Secretary Amundson on crafting an effective plan for the use of Wisconsin's additional CCDBG funds through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. This plan addresses pressing and immediate needs in our early care and education system, while putting in place mechanisms to stabilize this critical sector into the future.

The significant investment of \$106 million directly into our fragile child care infrastructure through new rounds of Child Care Counts payments is desperately needed. Child care programs were struggling before the pandemic to make ends meet and now find themselves on the brink of closure. For Wisconsin to emerge strong from the pandemic, we cannot afford to lose one more child care provider. Our economy, workforce, and the well-being of young children relies on the availability of quality child care.

The additional priorities identified in the plan: funding technology infrastructure, investing in recruitment and retention of early childhood educators, and the growth of shared services networks will bring a new level of efficiencies desperately needed for this industry to survive. Phase One shows a deep understanding that the business of operating high-quality child care requires strong public investments; we

know working families can't pay more for care, especially right now. Phase Two, incentivizing private sector partnerships with a focus on securing the least available care in our state, that for infants and toddlers, addresses a critically needed pathway for sustainability of this type of care.

Child care has been urged to remain open throughout the pandemic and has emerged as one of the most essential workforces in our state to ensure parents and guardians of young children could continue to perform vital work in essential industries and that our children receive the care, education and emotional support they need now more than ever. As a state, we need to continue to explore comprehensive ways to better support our child care infrastructure so our local economies, workforces, and communities which rely on it can remain strong and flourish. The plan announced today for quickly getting added resources out to child care is one step in the right direction.