

Weekly Dem radio address: Gov. Evers urges Republicans to invest in making child care more affordable, accessible statewide

Posted on Friday, Jul 28, 2023

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today delivered the Democratic Radio Address urging Republican legislators to invest in making child care more affordable and accessible statewide. In the governor's 2023-25 biennial budget proposal, he proposed making the Child Care Counts Program a permanent state program with a more than \$340 million investment to continue supporting Wisconsin's early care and education community, as well as the working families who depend on this care to get to work and put food on their tables. Unfortunately, despite the state's historic surplus, Republicans in the Legislature decided against putting any funding toward Child Care Counts, meaning the program is set to end in January 2024.

Through action he took on the biennial budget earlier this month, Gov. Evers ensured ample state resources are readily available to help stabilize the state's child care industry and address the state's longstanding workforce challenges.

In his veto message, Gov. Evers indicated he is giving the Legislature a second chance to come back and complete their work on the biennial budget with a meaningful plan to bolster the state's workforce, including making the substantial investments necessary to stabilize the state's child care industry and ensure child care is affordable and accessible to keep parents in the workforce. With historically low unemployment and historically high workforce participation, the Legislature failing to address the state's impending child care crisis could seriously exacerbate the state's existing workforce challenges.

Hey there. Governor Tony Evers here.

We know that our state's child care industry has long faced challenges—and those challenges only got worse with the pandemic.

But thanks to our Child Care Counts Program, we've been able to help stabilize the child care industry and make sure child care is more affordable and accessible for working families.

To date, Child Care Counts has helped more than 4,300 child care providers keep their doors open, ensuring the employment of 22,000 child care professionals and allowing providers to continue to provide high-quality care to more than 113,000 kids.

Unfortunately, Republicans rejected my budget investments in Child Care Counts, leaving parents, kids, workers, and the child care industry facing a fiscal cliff.

If the Legislature fails to address the looming child care crisis facing our state, a recent report estimates that 2,110 child care programs could close their doors, we could lose over 4,800 child care jobs, and over 87,000 children could be left without care.

Folks—that would be a catastrophe for our state's economy, workforce, and businesses, potentially causing about half a billion dollars in economic impacts across our state.

Given our state's longstanding workforce challenges and historically low unemployment as it is, Wisconsin simply cannot afford to have more workers leave our workforce.

Through my budget vetoes, I've made sure there are readily available state resources for Republicans to come back into session and make the substantial investments necessary to stabilize our state's child care industry and keep parents in the workforce.

Expanding access to child care is what's best for our kids, it's what's best for our families, and it's what's best for our state's workforce and our economy, too.

We have to get this done. Thanks.