

Caitlin Mitchell: Tom Tiffany put child care at risk as he pushed us toward default

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Earlier this month our nation successfully avoided a historic default on our nation's debt, but Congressman Tom Tiffany opposed it. His vote against the debt ceiling bill came solely because he did not get what he wanted: an extreme plan that would've been devastating for Wisconsin families and children.

I am the proud owner and operator of Spots & Stripes Early Learning Center, a quality childcare and early education center for infants through school-age kiddos. Since opening our doors in 2015, we have cared for nearly 500 children. We feel incredibly grateful for the community of families and staff that have made this possible. Working with this demographic every day, I understand the challenges the child care industry faces and the tough decisions facing Wisconsin families. It's why I'm particularly concerned that Congressman Tiffany pushed us closer toward default – and an economic disaster – because he wanted to make additional cuts to child care and other essential programs.

In his statement following his vote, Congressman Tiffany made it clear that he wouldn't support any compromise that would responsibly raise the debt ceiling. Instead, he preferred the provisions in the "Default on America Act," which he previously voted for in April. This extreme deal would have been catastrophic for Wisconsin, especially our children. If Congressman Tiffany had his way and the "Default on America Act" was signed into law, 24,000 women, infants, and children in our state would have lost access to the food assistance programs they depend on. Additionally, at a time when so many families struggle to access child care, this plan would have slashed spots for at least 5,500 Wisconsin children.

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I have always had a passion for children and the incredible things they're capable of. We work tirelessly to provide a safe, warm, and interactive environment where they can be challenged to thrive. But even today we face insurmountable challenges in making these programs accessible. With staffing shortages and the lack of fundamental funding for child care programs, we haven't been able to enroll new families for nearly a year.

The cuts that Congressman Tiffany continues to stand by would have been devastating. With decreased funding, programs like ours would be even more challenging for families to access, leaving families to wonder how they will provide even the most basic necessities for their children. Wisconsin families cannot be put in that position and Congressman Tiffany should recognize that.

We demand more from our elected officials. It is far past time Congressman Tiffany stand behind the people of Wisconsin and fight for us -not against us -in Congress.

-Mitchell is an advocate for Wisconsin families and children and is the owner of Spots & Stripes Early Learning Center in Bloomer, Wisconsin.