

Gov. Evers: Urges legislature to invest in child care and address state's chronic workforce challenges

Posted on Tuesday, Aug 22, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, just a month out from [his special session call of the Wisconsin State Legislature](#), is continuing to urge the Legislature to address the looming child care industry fiscal cliff and pass a comprehensive plan to address the state's chronic workforce challenges. Gov. Evers is continuing a statewide tour visiting child care providers across the state, including recent visits in Milwaukee, Appleton, Rhinelander, Eau Claire, Lancaster, Holmen, and Kewaskum, to discuss the importance of the child care industry and the impact its collapse would have on the state's workforce. According to a [report](#) from The Century Foundation, it is estimated that without the necessary investments to stave off the looming fiscal cliff facing the state's child care industry, 2,110 child care programs are projected to close, resulting in the loss of over 4,880 child care jobs, leaving more than 87,000 kids in Wisconsin without child care, and potentially causing approximately half a billion dollars in economic impacts between parents leaving the workforce and reduced employer productivity.

On Aug. 8, 2023, Gov. Evers announced he has called a special session of the Legislature to occur at 12:00 p.m. on Sept. 20, 2023, and presented his comprehensive workforce plan to use more than \$1 billion of the state's readily available \$4 billion budget surplus to prevent a looming collapse of the state's child care industry and ensure child care is affordable and accessible for working parents and families, expand paid family leave, invest in higher education to help educate, train, retain, and recruit talented workers, and support targeted solutions to workforce challenges in high-need areas, specifically the state's healthcare and education workforce sectors. More information about the governor's special session plan is available [here](#).

“I’ve spent the last month visiting child care providers all across Wisconsin, and it is undeniable that our state’s families, workforce, and economy depend on access to affordable, quality child care to be successful,” said Gov. Evers. “Without continued state investments from lawmakers, the child care industry is facing a fiscal cliff, and we are already seeing the consequences of this inaction, with providers having to make difficult decisions to cut pay for their employees, raise rates on working families, or worse, close their doors. This is about the survival of an industry that is vital to our workforce, and Legislative inaction will have disastrous and cascading economic impacts.

“We simply cannot afford to see any more child care providers close or any more workers leave our already-strapped workforce. I’m asking folks across the state to contact their state representatives and state senators and demand that they put our kids, families, and workforce first and continue to fund the Child Care Counts Program.”

Gov. Evers has made it a priority to address Wisconsin’s workforce challenges, including by investing in efforts that support affordable, accessible child care, like the Child Care Counts Program that to date has helped more than 4,440 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. In his 2023-25 biennial budget proposal, Gov. Evers proposed making the Child Care Counts Program permanent 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, and despite the state’s historic budget surplus, Republicans in the Legislature decided against putting any funding toward Child Care Counts in the state budget, meaning the program is set to end in January 2024.

With less than a month before the special session date, Wisconsinites are encouraged to find contact information for their local state representative and state senator by entering their address [here](#) to express their support for the governor’s special session plan to bolster our state’s workforce, maintain our economic momentum, and most importantly, do the right thing for Wisconsin.

Since signing the 2023-25 biennial budget in July, the governor has visited 19 child

care providers, including YMCA day camps and Boys and Girls Clubs, in communities across the state to highlight the need to stabilize the state's child care industry and make the Child Care Counts Program a permanent state program. With the Child Care Counts Program set to end in January 2024, the child care industry faces a looming fiscal cliff that, if not addressed, will result in child care providers having to raise their rates, reduce enrollment, or in the worst-case scenario, close their doors for good, leaving kids and families in the lurch.

The eight child care providers the governor has visited since calling for a special session, in total, have received over \$4.4 million in funding through the Child Care Counts Program across multiple locations to help them keep the lights on, pay their workers a fair wage, and continue providing affordable child care. As of June 2023, these eight providers were serving 808 kids across their locations, allowing more parents to stay in the workforce and contribute to local economic development.

During his visits, the governor has spoken to numerous child care providers and families across the state who have demonstrated the urgent need for state investment in the child care industry. Unsurprisingly, these providers have all shared how critical the Child Care Counts program has been for their ability to retain employees and provide the best possible care to their enrolled kids, and they've shared their concerns about what will happen when the program ends in 2024

Unfortunately, the state is already seeing the consequences of a lack of funding for the child care industry through multiple child care closures, throwing working families and their kids into uncertainty and destabilizing the workforce in local communities. For example, Lancaster, a town in Southwestern Wisconsin, is set to lose its second-largest child care provider, Giggles & Wiggles Daycare, at the end of the month. Due to the lack of funding and workforce shortages, they were not able to provide continued care to the 35 children enrolled, resulting in the decision to close their doors. Gov. Evers visited Giggles and Wiggles on August 10 where he met with the owner and the staff who are all losing their jobs, as well as some of the parents who are losing their provider and are scrambling to find other child care options in a community where there is already a lack of affordable providers.

Details of the governor's comprehensive special session plan to address the state's child care industry are available below.

Preventing Child Care Industry Collapse, Ensuring Access to Affordable Child Care Statewide

The governor's plan includes a more than \$365 million investment in child care across the state, including in the successful Child Care Counts and Partner Up! Programs at the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). The governor is proposing:

- More than \$340 million, including \$38.9 million in Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) funds, to continue the successful [Child Care Counts Program](#), which has been a lifeline for providers across the state; and
- \$22.3 million for the [Partner Up! Program](#), which has helped support employers in purchasing child care spots for their employees at existing regulated child care providers across the state. A portion of this investment redirects the \$15 million that the 2023-25 budget placed in the Joint Finance Committee supplemental appropriation for the purposes of grants to child care providers. As of March 2023, 220 businesses have enrolled in Partner Up!, securing slots for over 1,200 kids across Wisconsin.