

Raising Wisconsin: Public opinion: Child care needs Wisconsin state budget funding

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MADISON, WIS. - Wisconsin legislators have received more than 18,000 letters from families, child care providers, employers and community leaders who are calling for 2023-25 state budget funding to support child care.

Thousands of Wisconsinites have contacted the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC), legislative leadership and their state representatives and senators during the current state budget process. The outreach comes as public opinion continues to mount because of how essential child care is for working families, the economy and communities across the state.

“There is no question child care is essential for healthy families and a healthy economy. Working parents know it, child care providers know it and employers know it,” said Ruth Schmidt, executive director of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, which leads the Raising Wisconsin coalition. “It is time legislative leaders pay attention to the will of Wisconsinites to address longstanding child care challenges that will only worsen without state support. There is no question we need a solution that matches the magnitude of the challenges.”

The Legislature has collectively received more than 18,000 letters through Raising Wisconsin’s advocacy campaign, urging them to prioritize continuing the Child Care Counts Program with at least \$300 million. Child Care Counts, funding for which runs out in January 2024, has provided stabilization payments to child care programs to increase provider compensation and offset other operating costs. The potential end of the program will prompt even more significant challenges for working parents and the employers who depend on them.

“Stories are being told, and the message is loud and clear,” said Jackie Anderson, Director of Raising Wisconsin. “There is a resounding need for public investment in child care.”

The Legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) is scheduled to deliberate the Department of Children and Families budget this Thursday, June 15.