

Sen. Hesselbein: Wisconsin child care heroes deserve our respect, support

Posted on Monday, Feb 27, 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.](#)**

Respect.

Simple Respect.

We must add a group of unrecognized heroes to those deserving our greatest respect and admiration: those who dedicate themselves to child care in our state. One of the primary lessons learned during the pandemic and subsequent recovery is the absolutely vital role child care – and those who provide it – play in our economy, our communities and our families. They care for children so parents can work.

This week I had the opportunity to speak with child care providers throughout the 27th Senate District. The focus of conversation was the key proposal in Governor Evers budget that will maintain important financial support when federal COVID funding disappears. The Federal Child Care Counts Program kept many of our child care facilities up and running during the darkest days of the pandemic. As with many of the federal COVID provisions, this will end later this year.

Although the federal program will disappear, the vital resource our economy relies upon, safe, reliable child care, will not end in 2023. Our schools, small businesses and health care facilities – not to mention every other employer, supplier and retailer in Wisconsin – rely on our state's unmatched workforce, and the need for effective, reliable care remains undiminished.

In meeting after meeting before and after taking on my new role in the Senate,

providers and local businesses identified the need for continued child care support. The Administration has also cited data from child care providers indicating that upwards of 60% would be forced to raise rates and over a third would be forced to cut wages or halt increases to already under-compensated child care workers. Governor Evers recognizes the dire possibility of losing up to a quarter of child care providers if this support isn't maintained, and they want to avert this looming crisis—now! That's why the Governor highlighted his plans for child care during his budget address this month.

Highlighted by an historic investment of \$340 million to continue funding for the federally-initiated Child Care Counts program, the Governor's proposal will show our care providers the respect they deserve - and provide the funding they need - to continue their important role in keeping the economy moving.

The plan would continue monthly sums per child, and regular payments per staff member based on quality ratings and staffs full or part time status. This will help recruit and retain these essential workers.

With the Legislature off to a (very) slow start this session, I'm happy to see the Evers Administration generated a quick and effective start, producing a decisive budget proposal highlighting the heroes of our state recovery, and putting forward a plan that keeps the momentum going.

We have heard a great deal from my Republican colleagues since last summer about the support Wisconsin families and children can expect. We've also heard their demands that people return to the workplace, yet little mention of the underlying need to help parents find affordable and reliable child care. This is their opportunity back their demands with action. It's time to put up—simply put up and back this funding.

Child care is vital. We can, and we must, show the men and women who care for our children—these heroes—and the families they serve, the respect they deserve. Fund child care now.