W.E.C.A.N.

Wisconsin Early Childhood Action Needed

We are writing to ask that Gov. Evers request a special session for child care on the stand-alone $480 million bill. The 2026-2027 state budget causes great harm to the Wisconsin child, family, and economy. Childcare is the workforce behind the workforce; otherwise, during the pandemic, you would not have closed all K-12 schools and requested that childcare stay open to allow the economy to still function, especially for those essential workers. Yet, once again, we were denied any substantive funding to help keep our doors open. Unlike in years past, where we knew it was the Republicans blocking the support, we now have a governor and multiple democrats creating an even more disastrous situation than what the Republicans were doing. You have given us crumbs, expected us to be happy with this, and then provided a false narrative that this budget will lessen costs for parents.

The $110 million over the next 11 months is around 20% less than we are currently receiving. So, no, tuition prices will not be lowering; in fact, they will be going up next month to cover this loss, or providers will be closing their doors, especially in rural areas. This data was already provided to you from the UW Survey that you had cited multiple times. You telling parents it will decrease only creates confusion and parents will blame us; disrupting our important relationship due to the distrust your words have sown.

To make matters worse, you allowed a budget that deregulates our profession, not only further diminishing any integrity that our field had, but you have compromised the safety and well-being of our youngest children. And the sad thing is that these policies are not even going to increase any income for child care programs. The pilot program to pay programs more if they increase the ratios for children who are on subsidy is racist and classist. Furthermore, those programs will not be able to be accredited (4 or 5 star), and unlikely to earn 3,4, or 5 stars due to the inability to have any resemblance of quality anymore when they increase the ratios, which will then decrease the amount of the bonus they receive for children on shares. Not to mention, the increased cost of insurance for providers that will be increasing the ratios and allowing 16-year-olds to be teachers in those rooms. The “school readiness” is also not going to be impactful. Child care programs that have school districts with all-day free 4k likely find it almost impossible to compete with all-day free when they still need to charge for the remainder of the day AND wrap-around care.

The only children in Wisconsin who benefited from the budget were juvenile offenders. At $1 million per child, hopefully, their facilities and support are improved upon. Just imagine if we had supported those same children at an earlier age? Imagine if we had systems in place to

provide early intervention, or proactive services and therapy, you know…like what research tells us to do.
In August, closures and rates will increase. Please track the data. In September, please request a special session to address this, along with knowing that all the funding will be done in 2026, with nothing to replace it. If the Republicans gavel in and out, then so be it; it only makes them look bad. Or if they choose to discuss and possibly vote, then we will have that knowledge of their vote as we head into the election season.