


KAREN HURD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 68TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Bills 388,389,390,391,392
Public Testimony
Committee on Children and Families
September 6, 2023

Thank you, Chair Snyder, Vice-Chair Goeben, and members of the committee for holding this hearing on Assembly Bills 388, 389, 390, 391, and 392.

The child care industry for a number of years has been struggling due primarily to staffing issues. The use of federal funding given in direct subsidies to child care centers during the Covid-19 crisis, although providing temporary relief by allowing child care centers to raise salaries paid to workers, worsened the problem in the long-term as the funds were designated as only one-time relief. The federal monies will be exhausted by January 2024. This has created a steep fiscal cliff for our child care providers, driving the staffing problems that already existed into an even greater problem. The band aid of direct subsidies to temporarily address the problem is not a fix that can be sustained and most importantly does not address the root cause for the broken business model of the child care industry that existed prior to the Covid-19 crisis.

According to the Wisconsin Economic Development Institute's *Child Care in Wisconsin and Its Impact on Workforce and the Economy* report dated October 2022 to February 2023, the number of child care facilities in the state has been steadily declining for years. From 2013 to the Covid pandemic in 2020 child care facilities were lost at a rate ranging from 388 to 191 facilities each year. The influx of the federal dollars used for the Child Care Counts program stayed this steady loss of facilities. However, that loss may well begin again if we do not address the foundational issues of the faulty child care system.

Several measures have already been in place and have been strengthened. In the 2023-2025 biennial budget a total spend of 960 million dollars is included for child care. Ninety-three million of this is in new funding to help the child care industry. However, more work is needed to correct the pitfalls in the child care industry that have been in existence for far too long.

The package of Child Care bills brought forth before this committee today and AB 387 as part of this package that was heard in the Ways and Means Committee today are an outstanding way to address these issues. I believe that more work needs to be done in subsequent legislation on which I and my colleagues will continue to work, but the package before us now is absolutely needed to make a huge dent in correcting the broken child care model.

It must be noted that many projections have been made estimating a massive closure of child care facilities once the Child Care Counts money runs out. However, these estimates have yet to be proven. For instance, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) noted that they had recorded 166 child care centers that had closed between January 1, 2023 to June 21, 2023. During that timeframe there was no reduction in the Child Care Counts subsidies that were being distributed.

The first cut in Child Care Counts monies to child care facilities came in June of 2023. When questioning the number of closures, it came to light that there were many reasons for these closures that were not necessarily associated with Child Care Count dollars. Among these reasons were changes in location of the facility, change in status of licensing, children aging out of the facility, and facilities that came into being during Covid with more parents at home operating a Family Child care center having now moved back into other areas of the workforce once the Covid crisis ended. Other reasons are moves out-of-state and personal reasons. The threat of the loss of Child Care Counts may or may not be part of the reasons; however, that is unknown at this time.

In wanting to shed more light on the projections of child care facilities closing so that we can better address the problem, an inquiry was made of two of the Child Care Resource Referral (CCRR) agencies that service my district and the area surrounding and north of my district. These are mostly rural areas where the child care facility crunch hits the hardest. These two CCRRs of the nine such non-profit agencies that serve all 72 counties of our state reported that since Child Care Counts monies have been cut by half in June of 2023 that in their collective 20 county area that they have had only 6 child care facilities close. These six were Family Child care centers (home-based) and not group centers. The reasons from these closures were one had moved out of state, one changed to being a group facility, one had their children age out, and the other three gave reasons that had nothing to do with the lessening of Child Care Counts subsidies. Of course, it is early and the full data is yet to be collected. Of note, it is encouraging that in the ten-county area that my district Child Care Resource Referral agency services, they have had 28 new interested parties desiring to start a Family Child care facility and 3 interested parties in starting group facilities.

The child care industry does indeed need our help and attention, thus the package of five bills before this committee today. My colleague, Rep. Goeben will speak to four of them, but I will address AB 388, the Child Care Center Renovations Loan Program. This bill provides a child care facility the needed resource to open or expand a child care facility by making needed renovations. The loans are interest free. \$15 million is included in the supplemental JFC account for this program. 60% of the monies are to go to in-home providers, 40% to group facilities. The reason for the weight towards in-home providers is that the largest deficit in child care slots are in rural areas versus the cities. In-home facilities are the best solution in addressing the rural problem. In-home provider loans are capped at \$30,000 and group child care facilities are capped at \$100,000 per facility. This means that the loan program could service 300 Family Child Care in-home facilities and 60 group facilities at once. Since the loan program is revolving, as the loans are paid back then more facilities will be able to utilize this important resource. There is a claw-back provision in the bill to prevent fraud. If enrollment is not established or maintained within a year of the loan, the money would have to be returned.

Mr. Chairman, these child care bills are good for our children, our parents, our workforce. They are good for Wisconsin. I fully support each of these bills.



Sept. 6, 2023

Rep. Snyder, Chair

Rep. Goeben, Vice-Chair

Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

Testimony on 2023 Assembly Bill 388

Relating to: creating a child care center renovations loan program.

Thank you, Chairman Snyder and other committee members for allowing me to provide testimony. We have heard about the struggles that our child care centers have been having, and we are grateful to our child care providers for all their hard work.

I had a child care center director reach out to my office a few months ago. He shared with me that when they increased their capacity, their profit margin grew to the degree that they were able to keep staff on hand and finally stay afloat. We want to support the child care industry in ways that are sustainable and allow these business owners to grow without being reliant on federal COVID dollars. Allowing for expansion is a great way to do this, and we provided for this measure in our budget.

AB388 creates a child care center renovations revolving loan program. Under this bill, 60% of the loans will go to licensed in-home providers so that they will be able to renovate their home to be able to accept children as a child care facility. 40% of the loans will go to non-home facilities. These loans are interest-free and come with a claw back clause if the provider does not maintain enrollment.

This legislation is not the end-all-be-all, but it is a start. We need ways to support this industry so that it can be self-sustaining, and we hope that expansions and improvements for our child care centers will be one way of doing this. Thank you for your consideration and I'll take any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse James".

Senator Jesse James
23rd Senate District



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Sept. 6, 2023

Chairman Snyder, and members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families, my name is Ruth Schmidt and I am the executive director of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, the state affiliate of National Association for the Education of Young Children. WECA serves and advocates for the early childhood workforce and early care and education in Wisconsin.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to provide our feedback on the proposed package of legislation. Before I do, I want to note that I am here today on behalf of early childhood educators and programs enrolled in WECA services from across the state who care for Wisconsin's young children and families. Most of these individuals are unable to attend today's hearing –not because they do not care about this bill package, but because they are dedicated to the work they do and are struggling to keep their doors open so that families can work, and our economy can continue to grow.

I also want to note that as WECA reviewed the bills in front of you today, one guiding question was the cornerstone for our analysis: *is this what is best for kids?* Because while there are a lot of headlines about the child care industry these days, we can't lose sight of our why. Our why is ensuring every child in this state has access to safe, quality care.

When this package was circulated last week, I noticed the co-sponsorship memo included a common blurb that acknowledged the depth of this issue and how it is impacting Wisconsin families. While WECA generally is concerned with this package, I was encouraged to see this acknowledgement.

Acknowledging the importance of child care is key – early childhood education is foundational early learning for our youngest children during their most critical developmental period. It's also a vital support for working parents and caregivers and a business and economic tool. Despite being essential and critical, decades of limited public investments have created a failed child care market, which was further damaged by the effects of the pandemic. This is why state funding to support child care (in conjunction with the parent fees) is so necessary. It is also why this was one of the most common issues Joint Finance Committee members heard about during their public hearings and why you received more than 100,000 letters from your constituents who asked you to continue Child Care Counts with state investment of general purpose revenue.

That all being said, this legislative package completely misses the mark. WECA is opposed to the following bills, and I will now walk through our concerns:

Assistant Child Care Teachers (AB 390): WECA fully supports building the career pipeline for child care teachers. However, this legislation is problematic in that not only does it lower the age for child care teachers to 16, but it also removes all the current supervision guardrails for these young assistants. Those regulations, such as limiting the amount of time an assistant teacher can supervise a group of children in full-day centers, are there for the safety of the children. It is important to note we reached out to our national affiliate, and they also would oppose allowing 16 year olds unsupervised with

children of any age, for safety reasons related to both the children in care and the employed youth, as well as quality concerns.

There are other ways to encourage individuals to stay in this field – most notably ensuring they can make a living wage and are regarded as professionals and not just “baby-sitters.” Other states have taken different approaches to focus on growing the workforce, some, like Louisiana and Nebraska established refunded tax credit for child care teachers. There are other options to consider building the child care workforce without jeopardizing the safety of kids.

Modifying Teacher:Child Ratios in Group Child Care Centers (AB 391): Regulations in child care, including teacher-to-child ratios are in place to ensure safety measures for children. [National research from the National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) clearly shows deregulation does not increase child care supply, but it is proven that it will [add to the child care staffing crisis and burnout](#) at a time when programs are closing because they already are experiencing a staff exodus.

Maintaining appropriate staff:child ratios are important for several reasons including, to decrease the number of situations that threaten the children’s safety, help ensure children receive adequate care and supervision, set the environment for high-quality interactions between caregivers and children that can promote children’s well-being.

Wisconsin’s current group-child ratios align with national best practices and are similar to several neighboring states, including Indiana, Michigan and Illinois. It also is important to note the child care industry (e.g. the regulated industry) at large did not seek these changes because they know this will not solve its challenges, but will only drive more child care educators from the field. And above all, back to the cornerstone question – this is not what is best for our kids.

Certified Child Care (AB 392): Wisconsin’s certified child care was created to provide way for parents, relatives and other caregivers who watch their own children (up to 3) to also be eligible to receive payment under the Wisconsin Shares program if they also care for up to 3 non-related children. When a certified child care provider exceeds that limit, they must be licensed as a licensed family child care provider. The step from certified to licensing is established to ensure the appropriate safety guidelines can be maintained.

In addition, WECA would suggest modifying AB 388 and AB 389 to more align with industry needs and standards:

Child Care Loan Fund (AB 388): The state budget only included \$15 million in state general purpose revenue for child care that remains in the Legislature’s supplemental account and is currently proposed in this package as a revolving loan program. WECA believes this legislation would be more impactful with the funds distributed as grants. Furthermore, WECA encourages the committee to consider targeting the funding for individuals seeking to start a child care or those individuals that are certified and want to become licensed.



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Large Family Child Care (AB 389): WECA is not opposed to creating a new classification for large family child care. However, we want to ensure that there is adequate safety of the children in this setting from a building code capacity. We are concerned that this is not addressed in the creation of this additional category.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here and testify today. I do also want to be clear about what is next without a significant state investment into child care: recently, WECA conducted a survey of child care providers and parents. The survey results show the already-grave consequences of a lack of investment in the child care industry. Without the ongoing support to recruit and retain educators, rates are already going up for parents, and providers are considering closing or leaving the field. It is clear an infusion of state revenue is necessary to work to stabilize this long-challenged industry.

The federal pandemic funding that came directly to the child care industry kept doors open and children in care, and parents able to go to work. We know it had an impact because of the documented results of this investment. Our organization has been calling for this type of investment for many years, long before the pandemic. This is a chronic problem with chronic challenges that are larger than one city, one county, one state. Investing in child care industry stabilization will have lasting, positive effects on the development of young children, allow child care programs to keep serving working families, and support the state's economic health.

In its simplest possible terms: It is what is best for our kids.

Thank you again for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sources:

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2022:

https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-73607/2022_policy_deregulationresourcepolicymakers_final.pdf

Child Trends, 2017: <https://www.childtrends.org/blog/higher-child-staff-ratios-threaten-quality-child-care>

Ratio Chart Comparison of Group Child Care: Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin

Group Child Care Centers

Ratios in **yellow** indicate higher than Wisconsin, ratios in **green** indicate lower than Wisconsin

	Illinois		Iowa		Michigan		Minnesota		Wisconsin	
	Ratio	Group size	Ratio	Group size	Ratio	Group size	Ratio	Group size	Ratio	Group size
0-6 weeks			1:4		1:4	12			1:4	8
6 weeks- 12 months	1:4	12	1:4		1:4	12	1:4	8	1:4	8
12 months (1 year)-14 months (1.16 years)	1:4	12	1:4		1:4	12	1:4	8	1:4	8
14 (1.16 years)- 16 months (1.3 years)	1:5	15	1:4		1:4	12	1:4	8	1:4	8
16 months (1.3 years) – 24 months (2 years)	1:5	15	1:4		1:4	12	1:7	14	1:4	8
24 months (2 years)- 30 months (2.5 years)	1:8	16	1:7		1:4	12	1:7	14	1:6	12
30 months (2.5 years)- 33 months (2.75 years)	1:8	16	1:7		1:8	16	1:7	14	1:8	16
33 months (2.75 years)-35 months (2.91 years)	1:8	16	1:7		1:8	16	1:10	20	1:8	16
3 years	1:10	17	1:10	20*	1:10	30	1:10	20	1:10	20
4 years	1:10	17	1:12	20*	1:12	36	1:10	20	1:13	26
5 years	1:17	17	1:15	20*	1:12	36	1:10	20	1:18	36
Kindergarten to 10 years	1:20	30	1:15		1:18	36	1:15	30	1:18	36
10 years to 12 years	1:20	30	1:20		1:18	36	1:15	30	1:18	36

NOTES:

Minnesota [Ratio and Group Size.pdf \(mn.gov\)](#)

Illinois [Rules 407 Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers \(illinois.gov\)](#)

Iowa [Comm. 204, Care Centers and Preschools Licensing Standards and Procedures \(iowa.gov\)](#) , *best practice group size [Preschool Ratio and Class Size Maximum by Program Standards - December 2020 \(educateiowa.gov\)](#)

Michigan [Section R. 400.8182 - Ratio and group size requirements, Mich. Admin. Code R. 400.8182 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)

Wisconsin [Your Guide to Regulated Child Care, DCF-P-2436 \(wisconsin.gov\)](#)

Deregulation Won't Solve Child Care . . . But It Will Decrease Safety and Supply

August 2022

Increasing child care access, quality, and affordability must be a national, state, and local priority. Decades of research, data, and experience make clear, however, that the solution to growing the supply of quality child care supply is not through deregulation that lowers health, safety, staffing, and qualification requirements. The solution, rather, is through significant investments—in the education and compensation of the early childhood workforce, facilities, and family supports.

No Correlation Between Regulations and Child Care Supply

Regulations are often scapegoated for the high price and limited availability of licensed child care. However, previous [analysis](#) has found no correlation between the strictness of state regulations and state levels of child care supply, indicating that more stringent regulation is unlikely to have a large impact on child care supply.

Prior to the pandemic, [researchers examined how state regulations correlate with supply shortages](#) by scoring the following regulations in each state:

- › Teacher-to-child ratios
- › Group sizes
- › Minimum number of children at which point licensing is mandatory
- › Teacher and director qualification requirements

The stricter a regulation, the higher its score. When overlaid with data on child care supply, however, the analysis found no correlation between the state regulations examined and child care supply. Further, none of the individual factors that contributed to the overall regulation score were shown to have a statistically significant impact on the supply of child care slots. While a wide array of factors affect child care supply, these results indicate that more stringent regulations aren't driving the problem.

Ratios and Group Sizes are Necessary for Safety and Quality—and Prevent Educator Burnout and Turnover

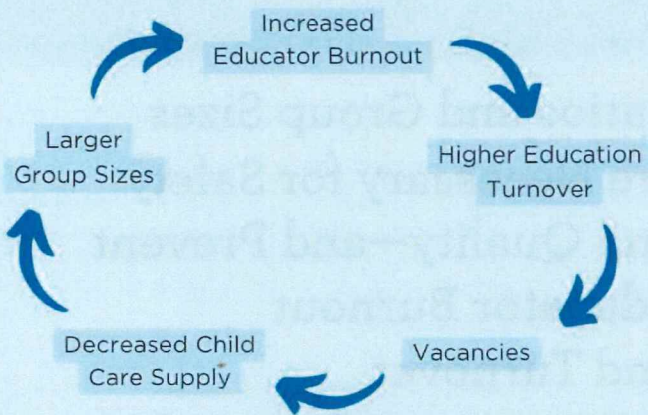
Regulations provide [important safety protections](#) for children and uphold the [quality](#) of early education and care. Regulations such as staff to child ratios and maximum group sizes ensure adequate supervision and interaction with children to keep them safe and engaged in learning, while requirements regarding qualifications and professional development recognize and uplift the depth of knowledge, skills, and competencies it takes to deliver on the complex science of early learning in the early years.

Recommended [developmentally appropriate maximum group sizes and staff to child ratios](#) in center- or school-based settings:

Age	Ratio	Max. Class Size
Infant (Birth-15 months)	1:4	8
Toddler/Two (12-36 months)	1:6	12
Preschool (30 months-5 years)	1:10	20

Maintaining low ratios and group sizes are also key to early childhood educator success and well-being. During the early stages of the pandemic, when classrooms were capped at much smaller group sizes to promote health and safety, [anecdotal evidence](#) suggests educators saw positive changes regarding interactions with children and were feeling less burnt out at the end of the day.

Lower ratios and smaller group sizes are necessary to keep children safe - but they also keep educators in their programs by limiting staff burnout, turnover, and staffing shortages. Efforts to loosen regulations, driven by a goal of increasing supply and program revenue, will actually have the opposite effect by driving educator burnout and turnover even higher.



“Having worked in settings with different ratios, I can assure you that the lower the ratio, the better the quality of care. To increase ratios would not only be detrimental to the developing child, it would increase burnout rates for a workforce that already carries a heavy load for minimal pay and benefits.” - Jenn Boisvert, Early Childhood Educator from Westbrook, Maine

Solutions Require Public Investment

While there are opportunities to streamline and lessen paperwork burdens, and target the revision of regulations that undermine the expertise and autonomy of early childhood educators, policies that make child care less

attractive to educators by making their jobs harder (via increased ratios and group sizes) will worsen the supply problem those policies are trying to solve.

The foundational problem underlying the child care crisis is the lack of adequate public funding; without substantial and sustainable investments, our nation will continue to struggle to address the scale and urgency of the challenges of [high child care prices](#), [child care deserts](#), and [low compensation](#). Quality child care is resource-intensive, but unlike in the K-12 education system or the ECE system in many other countries, parents in the U.S. must shoulder the brunt of the cost, along with the educators who subsidize the system through their own low wages. Unfortunately, this cost is more than most working families can afford, and far beyond what most states pay providers who participate in the child care subsidy system.

This is especially true for infant and toddler care, where the science of early learning is just as complex as in the older years, and where parents expect and educators need low ratios and group sizes to keep children safe and thriving.

- On average, and even before the pandemic, infant care cost 60% more to provide than pre-K, yet subsidy rates were just **27% higher**.
- At the same time, provider compensation accounts for **almost 70%** of the cost of providing child care for infants, yet early childhood educators working with infants are earning disproportionately low wages within an already underpaid field.

The solution is to increase public investment in child care to cover the cost of providing quality care. This by definition must include competitive compensation that recognizes the skill, competency, and value of early childhood educators, and allows for the recommended ratios and group sizes that are needed for educators to want to do their jobs, and to do them safely and well.

As states attempt to address critical child care supply issues, policymakers must remember that regulations promote safety and quality in child care providers, and efforts to undermine them won't solve the supply problem—but will cause harm. Solving our child care crisis will require a large-scale public investment that allows providers to meet regulations based on best practices and do right by children and families.



For Our Youngest Learners, We Cannot Compromise on Health and Safety

Families want peace of mind knowing that when their child is in child care, they are in the reliable hands of a provider that supports their child's healthy development, safety and overall well-being. To give families this assurance, health and safety regulations have been enacted to provide important safeguards for children and program staff while upholding the quality of care.

Navigating State and Local Regulations

State child care regulations provide important guardrails for the health and safety of children and program staff. Some local governments may create and enforce their own licensing requirements in addition to what the state mandates.

Group Sizes and Ratios:

Group sizes refers to the maximum number of children allowed in each child care center room or class or the maximum number of children allowed in a family child care home. Staff-to-Child Ratios refers to the minimum number of adults required for a specific number of children, based on the ages of the children.

Research shows that fewer children per educator and smaller group sizes overall contributes to health and safety, as well as stronger child development, especially for [infants and toddlers](#). [National standards](#) and [accreditation](#) requirements reflect these learnings.

Smaller groups of children and lower ratios allow staff to provide adequate supervision of children and respond in emergencies, including when evacuations are needed. [Studies](#) show that children who are in programs with lower ratios receive more stimulating and responsive care and have been linked to higher social competence, communication and language skills, and cognitive development.

Low ratios and group sizes also [benefit providers](#). They lessen stressful situations for staff, which can decrease burnout, demoralization, and turnover when classroom settings are more manageable.

Licensing Requirements:

A child care license addresses the minimum acceptable health, safety, and program standards for the legal operation of a program in a state or locality. Some child care programs may be exempt from licensing, depending on the type of program, where and when it operates, and the number of children in care.

All program settings can demonstrate a commitment to providing safe and healthy child care for the families and children in their community by becoming licensed, even when it is not required. While not the case everywhere, licensing standards should be setting-appropriate and reflect the expertise and input of impacted communities such as providers and educators. As part of their licensing requirements, states inspect child care programs to look for hazardous conditions or practices that may put children in harm's way. Federal law requires states to post the results of child care inspection reports online so families can make an informed decision when selecting care.

Bipartisan Support for Ensuring Health and Safety

The [2014 reauthorization](#) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) drew bipartisan support from members of Congress and included additional child care health and safety protections.

States must establish health and safety requirements, establish group-size limits and age-based staff-to-child ratios. They must also conduct criminal background checks for all child care staff and perform pre-licensure and annual inspections. Child care providers serving subsidy-eligible children must receive pre-service and ongoing training on topics like CPR, first aid, and safe sleep practices. Additionally, the updated law also directs states to make information available annually regarding the number of deaths, serious injuries and instances of child abuse in child care settings.

Provider Qualification Requirements:

Provider qualification requirements include education and credential attainment, experience, ongoing training, and professional development opportunities needed to be a successful educator.

Staff who meet qualification requirements are trained to provide health and safety assistance in emergencies, as well as promote the physical and mental health and cognitive development of the children in their care. State lead agencies monitor programs to ensure that providers meet all training required under its regulations.

Policy Solutions

For years, the supply of quality child care programs has struggled to match the demand of families. This is due to the lack of significant, sustained public investment and a heavy reliance on a financing structure that isn't designed to cover the full cost of high-quality child care. But efforts to undermine health, safety and quality won't solve the long-term child care crisis. In fact, an [analysis](#) of regulations in all 50 states and child care supply found there is little correlation between the two, indicating less stringent regulations do not help grow the supply of child care in a state.

At a minimum, policymakers should:

- Keep group sizes and ratios aligned with [national standards and best practices](#).
- Maintain strong licensing requirements around health and safety. States and localities should ensure that licensing requirements reflect stakeholder input from all program settings. Funding must be available for programs in all settings to meet, and exceed, requirements.
- Invest in the child care workforce to increase the supply of quality care. Providing high-quality early learning education and care takes a wealth of knowledge, experience, skills and competencies. The solution is increased public investment in the child care workforce. State regulations should ensure that provider qualifications are culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible and recognize the important work of family child care and family, friend and neighbor providers.

Zoning Ordinances

Child care programs typically must comply with local zoning, building and fire safety, and health and sanitation codes in addition to licensing. Some regulations, like zoning laws, unintentionally drive-up costs and reduce supply, but do not impact a program's quality or safety. In some cities or counties, zoning laws restrict the hours child care programs may operate. Family child care programs may struggle to obtain costly zoning permits or business licenses or may be prohibited by Homeowner Associations (HOAs) from establishing their business at all.

There may be [opportunities to reduce or modernize burdensome regulations](#) that do not make concessions on the health and safety of children and staff, like addressing local zoning ordinances and building codes that impact child care costs and operations.

State and local governments should ensure regulations in place have a clear purpose and avoid unintended consequences.

The Bottom Line: Child Care Needs Investment

Policymakers must consider solutions that invest in child care to address the root causes driving the sector's supply challenges. Instead of relaxing health and safety regulations, solving our child care crisis will require large-scale public investment that supports health, safety, and quality, and leads to the viability of the system long-term.



WCCAA Statement on Child Care Legislation:

Public Hearings on 9/6/2023

The Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association (WCCAA) represents owners and administrators of child care centers across Wisconsin. WCCAA stands ready to work with all legislators and state officials who want to address the state's current child care crisis.

WCCAA would like to thank the legislators who have authored the bills being considered today. WCCAA fully supports one bill, supports another bill while requesting a change, opposes one bill, is neutral on one bill, and has no position on two bills because they do not relate to our businesses.

Unfortunately, the bills do not provide the funding that our centers desperately need. Without continuation of the Child Care Counts program, or a similar funding program, centers will continue to close in Wisconsin and families will lose access to child care, thereby harming our economy.

Following are WCCAA's positions on the bills being considered today.

Assembly Ways & Means Committee, 9/6/2023 Public Hearing

AB 387, creating a child care reimbursement program, providing an income tax subtraction for certain contributions to a child care reimbursement account, and granting rule-making authority. **WCCAA Position: Support.** WCCAA supports any initiative that will make it easier for families to afford child care.

Assembly Children and Families Committee, 9/6/2023 Public Hearing

AB 388, creating a child care center renovations loan program. **WCCAA Position: Support with Requested Change.** WCCAA asks that the language requiring that 60% of the loans go to in-home providers be removed from the bill. In-home providers do not have 60% of the child care market. We do not believe it makes sense to include this language. Otherwise, WCCAA supports any proposal that would provide new resources to child care centers.

AB 389, relating to the regulation of large family child care centers. **WCCAA: No Position**, as this bill does not relate to our businesses.

AB 390, modifying administrative rules relating to assistant child care teachers. **WCCAA Position: Oppose.** WCCAA does not believe that most 16-year-olds are prepared to work as

assistant child care teachers. We are open to the discussion of ways to allow certain, well-qualified 16-year-olds to work in centers.

AB 391, relating to modifying administrative rules regarding the number of child care workers and children in group child care centers. **WCCAA Position: Neutral.** We don't believe this bill will help our centers, but it could in some cases help families on wait lists to receive slots at centers.

AB 392, relating to allowing certified child care operators to provide care to up to six children. **WCCAA: No Position**, as this bill does not relate to our businesses.

Thank you for considering the views of the state's child care center owners and administrators.



Milwaukee Child Care Alliance Statement on Legislation Public Hearings: 9/6/2023

The Milwaukee Child Care Alliance is a network of leaders in early care and education, including small and large providers and other stakeholders, who are committed to strengthening the lives of children and families through advocating to improve the quality of early care and education in the Greater Milwaukee Area.

The leaders of MCCA would very much like to be at the Capitol in person today to testify on the legislation. Unfortunately, the public hearings were scheduled at a time when many centers have just brought in new pupils during the first week of school. We are working directly in early care and education, and therefore cannot testify.

The bills being considered today fail to address the loudly communicated challenges and needs expressed by providers in this profession, both large and small businesses. These needs include the inevitable rising costs of quality care and the increased costs directly incurred to attract and retain quality early care and education teachers and out of school time educators. Not addressing these two key areas still results in an inability to meet the needs of the community and all in the workforce. Without continuation of the Child Care Counts program, or a similar funding program, centers will continue to close in Wisconsin and families will lose access to child care, thereby harming our economy.

Even though the bills will not address our needs, MCCA nevertheless supports two of the bills being considered. For one of the bills, MCCA is requesting a change, along with the Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association (WCCAA).

Following are MCCA's positions on the bills being considered today.

Assembly Ways & Means Committee, 9/6/2023 Public Hearing

AB 387, creating a child care reimbursement program, providing an income tax subtraction for certain contributions to a child care reimbursement account, and granting rule-making authority. **MCCA Position: Support.** MCCA supports initiatives to assist families with the cost of high quality, affordable and accessible early care and education and out of school time.

Assembly Children and Families Committee, 9/6/2023 Public Hearing

AB 388, creating a child care center renovations loan program. **MCCA Position: Support with change requested by the Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association (remove 60% in-home requirement).** MCCA is concerned about the repayment clause if the reason for the openings is a result of the high cost of care for

parents and/or the provider is unable to recruit and retain quality educators needed to fill the openings.

AB 389, relating to the regulation of large family child care centers. **MCCA Position: Neutral.** MCCA fails to understand why this would not be categorized as a small group center.

AB 390, modifying administrative rules relating to assistant child care teachers. **MCCA Position: Oppose.** MCCA agrees with WCCAA that most 16-year-olds are not prepared to work as assistant child care teachers. Along with WCCAA, we are open to the discussion of ways to allow certain, well-qualified 16-year-olds to work in centers.

AB 391, relating to modifying administrative rules regarding the number of child care workers and children in group child care centers. **MCCA Position: Strongly Oppose.** MCCA believes that increasing the adult-to-child ratio and maximum group size, or any combination thereof, directly negates all efforts to increase quality in all early care and education and out of school time programs. Furthermore, it decreases recruitment and retention efforts for teachers within this profession, which is already a significant challenge.

AB 392, relating to allowing certified child care operators to provide care to up to six children. **MCCA: No Position**, as this is not a significant portion of businesses within this profession.

Thank you for considering the views of the Milwaukee Child Care Alliance.



Greetings,

I am a Child Care Resource & Referral Center Director representing largely rural child care in Western Wisconsin. I have worked in child care for over 30 years as a child care provider and a CCR&R consultant in various positions, promoting positive outcomes for young children and their families.

Thank you for including your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency in this crucial conversation. We sincerely appreciate your continued work toward solving the child care crisis many families, child care providers and communities face today.

This is a pivotal time in our history, and we must come together to work on a solution that fits the state's rural and urban areas. The child care crisis is a multifaceted problem that requires complex solutions. It is encouraging that these bills are being proposed and that child care is seen as an economic driver for families and employers throughout the state. The proposed bills lay the groundwork for positive changes if implemented with sound support and research-based practices.

- **LRB-3528 / LRB-4243 relating to: creating a child care reimbursement account program, providing an income tax subtraction for certain contributions to a child care reimbursement account and granting rule-making authority.**

The implementation of this bill will help families save on the cost of child care. Making child care more affordable to families assists in the recruitment and retention of the workforce in Wisconsin, which benefits employers, employees, and the community.

- **LRB-3161 relating to: creating a child care center renovations loan program.**

The implementation of this bill would support the expansion and/or upgrading of child care programs. While this loan program could be a sustainable option, offering a grant program in addition would be beneficial for recruiting new programs in rural areas.

- **LRB-3168 / LRB-4239 relating to: the regulation of large family child care centers.**

The implementation of this bill may encourage rural family child care providers to expand offering additional slots for children. This could increase access and decrease driving time for families in rural communities. Family child care providers will need training in guiding larger groups of children and running a business with employees. Support for family child care providers is essential in rural areas where group centers cannot be sustained.

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- **LRB-4198 / LRB-4242 relating to: allowing certified care operators to provide care to up to six children.**

The implementation of this bill will allow certified providers the flexibility needed to care for more children. This could open more slots in rural communities for WI Shares families. More children in certified care could also benefit from other programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program and additional quality initiatives.

- **LRB-4197 / LRB-4238 relating to: Modifying administrative rules regarding the number of child care workers and children in group child care centers.**

When adult to child ratio and group size are small, positive interactions increase and children experience a more nurturing environment and capacity to build social emotional skills. We have neighboring states that have different ratios than Wisconsin. What are the outcomes they are seeing? Do children have the social and emotional skills needed for school? More research is needed to ensure safe environments are provided for children.

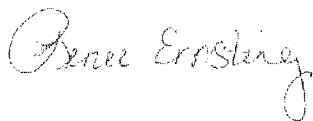
- **LRB-3294 / LRB-4237 relating to: modifying administrative rules relating to assistant child care teachers.**

Simply achieving a certain age does not make someone fit to care for children but is dependent on life experiences and support from other experienced adults. Many high school programs prepare students to work in the field with no immediate path to work in child care. This bill has the potential to eliminate the pause in a direct pathway to employment. However, a 16- or 17-year-olds ability to supervise children alone and be responsible for direct communication with parents as a lead teacher is concerning. A position as an assistant teacher may be more appropriate.

Any time we make changes, we can't lose sight of the children and what is best for their development.

I am confident that we can work together to support child care programs, keep children safe, and provide best outcomes for our youngest citizens. Thank you for working hard to represent and support the interests of Wisconsin's children, families, and communities.

Sincerely,



Director of Child Care Partnership Resource & Referral Center, Inc., a program of Western Dairyland EOC



To whom it may concern:

I am writing about the new ratio that is in discussion.

I feel that raising the ratio to 10 children would be a wonderful thing. This will help me in my Family Childcare, with families that have new little ones and I already have their other children in my care. Having them to have to find a different daycare for one child is not extremely easy to do when the childcare industry is low in my area. It just makes sense to have all their children in once childcare center. This will also help by allowing us to have a few extra children in our care, to help those other families that are looking for care for one child.

Also allowing us to have more under the age of two would also be extremely helpful. When you already have one in your care and a family is having another child, you cannot take the child if you already have one or two little ones under the age of two. Right now, there seems to be a great demand for families looking for care for children that are the ages on one, if we can have an additional one or two that age it would help many families get the care they are looking for.

Please consider raising the ratio to help many families, and us as providers as well.

Thank you

Michelle Tollefson

Butterfly Kisses Family Childcare owner

August 29,2023

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lisa Buchholz. I am a certified family provider in Outagamie County. I am writing to you to share how I believe raising the ratio age limits from 3 children under 7 years of age to 6 children under 7 years of age would impact myself and my community for good.

I became an in-home provider, as I am sure many do, to be at home with my own children. This decision was made not only because of my desire to watch my children grow up, but because I had been in the early childhood field for years, and I felt qualified to take on the task of caring for other children. The ability to contribute to my family's income while caring for my children is a blessing. However, it is not as profitable as other professions, professions where I could have a clear separation between work and family and work markedly fewer hours. My goal has never to be rich, yet the added income potential of 3 more spots would be substantial in allowing me to use my income to meet my family's long-term needs and begin saving for retirement.

In my community, I see many families searching for childcare, many desperate for a spot as they remain on waiting lists. I get a call at least once a week from expecting families inquiring about future care. I hear the parents lament as I tell them I do not anticipate an opening but will add them to yet another waiting list. Families need affordable, available, high-quality childcare to return to the work force and contribute to the local economy. One way I see to address "affordable" and "available" is giving providers the opportunity to accept more children.

Having the ability to accept more children is a positive change because it also allows siblings to stay together. Some of my families have had to find care elsewhere because I did not have room for their coming sibling. This is not good for anyone. I lost a family I enjoyed working with because the parents had to find alternative care that would accommodate BOTH children. The child, who had been with me for years, had to adjust to a second life change on top of the shift in the family dynamic. This does not even touch on the fact that many families have non-school aged children close in age I could not accept even if I began from scratch. It limits the number of families I can serve.

In summation, this proposed change in age limitations allows family childcare providers like me the opportunity to make more income and serve more families, while benefiting families by making more spots available for care in general and permitting the possibility for siblings to stay together.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter,

Lisa Buchholz
Owner/Director
Joyful Noise Family Christian Childcare

August 31, 2023

Dear Senator Marklein,

Our family would like to share with you the importance of local childcare services and the impact it has on our community. Personally, we have needed to utilize childcare in our community for foster children in our care. Without childcare we would not have been able to provide a home for children placed outside their home.

In 2022 we had two children, ages six and two in our care. Being able to access local childcare meant that they were able to be kept together, as my husband and I work full time. Imagine a child not being able to live with their sibling during one of the most traumatic times of their lives, just because there was a home willing to care for them, but no one to watch them during the day? Having local childcare meant that family visits could occur during the day and minimize the transportation they had to experience. Being around same age peers allowed the toddler to advance developmentally to where she should have been.



Since then, our two girls have successfully moved back home and we are caring for a five-year-old. Dynamics are different for her and in her life in foster care has moved more than one typically does in a lifetime. Initially, we were driving 64 miles round trip daily, to and from her day care so we both could work. Transporting three children, to three locations meant the child in day care got there late some days which was hard for her routine. We barely got to spend any time with her outside of our driving as we would get ready in the morning and by the time she got home, it was time for dinner and bedtime. Since being able to move her to our community she has loved playing on her scooter in the evening, meeting our neighbors (and of course their dogs) and having extra time to read books. It has also allowed us to be more present to our other children because we are able to be at home, not driving for long periods of time.



To our family, having available licensed childcare options will allow children to remain in their community. They will see children that they will grow up with and make connections to last a lifetime. They will see familiar landmarks on walks and minimize time it takes to transport. It will allow the foster families caring for these children to continue to work and care others in their family as well. **Childhood memories should be those of fun experiences, being loved and cared for. Not being bounced around, made to feel unwanted just because there's no where to go during the day.**

There are families willing to open their homes, give their time, energy and resources to children, but we need those who have the ability to, to ensure we will have the childcare resources available to keep saying yes to those in need. **Please help us to help our community by supporting our childcare providers.**

Sincerely,

Allison and Aaron Bradt
Green County Foster Parents

August 30, 2023

R.E. Child Care Counts

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Katlyn Graebner and I live in Monroe, Wisconsin. I have two children, aged 3 and 6. I also work for Green County Human Services in the Children, Youth, and Families Unit as the Foster and Kinship Care Coordinator. Childcare and childcare issues are central topics in both my personal and professional lives.

One of my central job responsibilities is to recruit foster parents to help care for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities - children who have been victims of abuse and neglect and cannot be safely maintained in their homes. When I reach out to families who have inquired about any roadblocks they have to continuing the application process, many of them have cited concerns with locating or paying for childcare in our community. Of the 11 active, licensed foster homes in Green County there is only one home with a parent who does not work full time outside of the home. The other 10 homes are either single individuals or couples who both work full time outside of the home.

While foster parents can be eligible for the Wisconsin SHARES program to assist in the financial piece of childcare, it either does not cover the full tuition for a child or children or the licensed or certified provider does not accept SHARES for payment. Additionally, if the birth family would not have been eligible for SHARES based on their income at the time of removal, the foster family will not be eligible for it either. If SHARES cannot be utilized, foster families are expected to pay up front for childcare costs for up to the first six weeks of placement while the foster home rate is determined, processed, and provided to them.

Paying for childcare is typically the second hurdle that foster families face. Locating childcare with openings for children at a moment's notice has been next to impossible in the last several years. Most recently, a sibling set of young children has experienced several placement changes as a result of not being able to locate or secure childcare in Green County. This has led to the children being placed outside of their community which increases the time that they have to be in the car for traveling to see their parents and limits the frequency of interactions with their family due to scheduling and logistics concerns. These same concerns and issues have been cited by various relatives of the children who are unable to provide care to the children due to the lack of available childcare. As a child welfare professional, I know that children have better outcomes when they are placed with relatives or have minimal placement changes during their time in out of home placement. These children are slated to have poorer outcomes as a direct result of existing and ongoing childcare issues in our community.

Additionally, I can recall several cases in recent history that maltreatment could have been prevented if the family had access to affordable childcare in their community. Parents sometimes feel stuck between a rock and a hard place, so to speak, and leave their children unsupervised or with inappropriate caregivers when they are unable to access appropriate childcare. Oftentimes, these parents feel as though they must work in order to meet the basic needs of their family and adequate, consistent, affordable, and appropriate childcare is not a resource that is readily available to them. If the parents don't work, they aren't able to make ends meet. If there is nobody to watch their children then they are in a position to make an impossible decision.

Increasing available funding and resources for daycare providers in the State of Wisconsin has the ability to impact the child welfare system in many ways. It can positively impact recruitment and retention efforts for foster families and could help provide additional stability for children who are placed in out of home care. Additionally, it has the ability to reduce overall rates of abuse and neglect by allowing parents with limited resources (financially and tangible, supportive, appropriate people in their lives) to access and afford childcare. Families should never have to even consider if leaving their young children home unsupervised could be a potential solution to allow them to go to work. *Finding childcare should be as sure as enrolling your child in school. Even if you're nervous about your child going on their first day, wondering if they're going to make friends and have a good time, you know that they are going to go no matter what.*

In my personal life, I have been incredibly fortunate to have access to affordable childcare since my oldest was born in 2017. I had a childcare provider who was a friend of my co-worker's family who had availability to watch my son. She was our sole childcare provider until a few weeks ago when she suffered a medical emergency with a long road to recovery. My immediate concern was for our friend who has loved and cared for my children like her own for the last 6 years, but my second concern was how in the world we were going to find someone to watch our kids that we could afford.

In the weeks following, my husband and I were extremely privileged to be able to utilize his parents; however, that meant that we were driving 30 miles roundtrip in the morning and evening just so that we could work. My recent work experience trying to find childcare for the young children I mentioned above reminded me just how fortunate we were to have someone watching our kids. I knew that finding someone that I would feel comfortable with (due to my professional experience) would be a tall order, and then finding someone who was within our budget would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

I am very grateful that I saw an advertisement on a local Facebook parenting group that Tom and Christina had an opening for a child over the age of 2. Since they are a licensed program, I am aware that they are held to a very high standard by the Department of Children and Families. I feel confident and comfortable bringing my child to them every day because of these standards. While their tuition is higher than I was paying my previous provider, it is still very reasonable and affordable.

Our 6 year old is also involved in an after school program through the YMCA which comes with a monthly cost. The after school program is also a licensed child care program which would likely be impacted by changes to funding available to childcare providers which would be an additional monthly expense.

Although my husband and I work professional jobs well above minimum wage, we still generally live paycheck-to-paycheck. We do not live an extravagant lifestyle, we were fortunate to purchase our modest 1,500 sq. ft. 102 year old home in 2013, and still, we sometimes wonder if we're going to have enough to get by. If we were in a situation where we had to pay an additional \$75 to \$100 per week in childcare, it would certainly cause additional stress in our home. We take pride in being able to provide our children with positive childhood experiences such as camping and participating in sports and activities. If our family incurred additional monthly expenses ranging from \$300-\$400, we would likely have to consider changing the frequency of some of the activities we enjoy as a family.

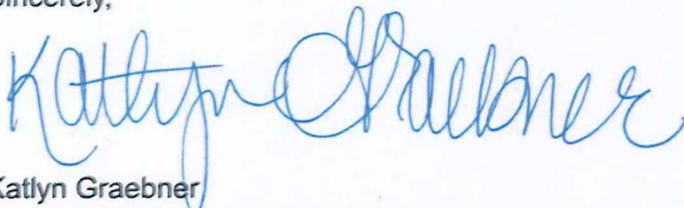
We would have to tell our children that we can't celebrate their birthdays like we once did, we can't participate in another sport this time, and that we can't go to their favorite campground more than once per year. Some of these things seem trivial compared to the realities faced by the clients and families our unit works with every day.

To me, losing childcare funding in an already dire childcare situation is like the domino that begins the spiral downhill. Childcare centers, families, foster parents, and communities are already struggling with the supports that are in place. If those supports go away, it could all come crumbling down. Children are the future of our community and our world, and they deserve every last bit of support that is available to them.

Ultimately, children would be paying the price and feeling the burden of the aftermath of closing childcare centers and higher childcare costs. If there is no childcare available, parents can't work. If parents can't work, they don't have enough money to meet the basic needs of their families. If the basic needs of the families aren't met, the children are at risk for abuse and neglect. If children are at risk for abuse and neglect, there is a potential that they could be removed from their home. If children are removed from their homes, they go to foster care. If children go to foster care but there are few foster parents available to take them in because they also need childcare, the children have the potential to get placed outside their communities. If children are placed outside their communities they end up with poorer outcomes than if we would have just been able to provide them with affordable, appropriate childcare services in the first place.

Thank you for your time listening to my story and how these issues impact every area of my life. I am passionate about helping children and families and believe to the core of my being that as a community and a society, we all have to take part in caring for some of the most vulnerable - our children. If you would like to have more discussion about these topics, I would be happy to speak with you at any time. Professionally, I can be reached at 608-328-9337 or kgraebner@gchsd.org. Personally, I can be reached at 608-843-1796 or katlyn.marie1990@gmail.com. Again, thank you for your time and I look forward to your support of our children and families.

Sincerely,



Katlyn Graebner
Foster Care Coordinator & Parent
Children, Youth, and Families Unit
Green County Human Services
N3152 State Rd. 81
Monroe, Wisconsin

Written Testimony for September 6, 2023 Public Hearing

Audra Wieser

Early Care and Education Director/Director of Operations

The Parenting Place, La Crosse

(A combined Child Care Resource and Referral/Family Resource Center)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written feedback regarding the proposed child care bills. While I am generally in support of many of the changes, I also wanted to share areas of question and concern. While I know many of the ideas in these bills will be met with apprehension, I do believe that the child care crisis has escalated to the point that we have to see *something* change and I'm encouraged that there is momentum to try some new ideas. For any of these ideas to be successful, I believe that they need to be paired with increased support and professional development for the child care workforce.

Some personal background:

Much of this feedback stems from my experience as a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in Minnesota since the timing of this hearing didn't allow targeted data collection in our own Service Delivery Area. For reference, here are the ratios and group sizes under Minnesota regulations.

Family Child Care Age Categories*	
Newborn	Less than 6 weeks
Infant	6 weeks to 12 months
Toddler	12 to 24 months
Preschooler	24 months to 5 years
School-age child	5 to 11 years
*As defined by Minnesota Statutes, chapter 245A	

I operated under 2 different licenses during my 5+ year tenure, with total group sizes of 10 and 12 (Class A and C2). While I didn't always choose to operate at full enrollment, there are times that I did, and it worked very well.

Family Child Care Ratios and Group Sizes

Setting	Class	Capacity	Adults	Children Under School-Age	Infant and Toddler Restrictions
Family Child Care	A	10	1	6	Of the under school-age children, 3 may be infants and toddlers with a maximum of 2 infants.
Specialized Infant and Toddler Family Child Care	B1	5	1	3	Maximum of 3 infants
	B2	6	1	4	Maximum of 2 infants
Group Family Child Care	C1	10	1	8	Of the under school-age children, 3 may be infants and toddlers with a maximum of 2 infants.
	C2	12	1	10	Of the under school-age children, 2 may be infants and toddlers with a maximum of 1 infant.
	C3	14	2	10	Of the under school-age children, 4 may be infants and toddlers with a maximum of 3 infants.
Specialized Infant and Toddler Group Family Child Care	D	9	2	7	Maximum of 4 infants

Throughout the operation of my business, no children *ever* suffered a serious injury under my care and I operated an intentional, play-based program with quality learning activities for multi-age children. When I had three children under two enrolled, children with more challenging behaviors/needs to serve, or provided transportation to child activities as my group got older, I chose to operate with fewer children. I was thankful for the choice these ratios provided and it allowed me the flexibility to offer back-up/temporary care at times when friends or family needed it. I also had many colleagues who provided a quality care setting, one business with 14 children in care (husband-wife team).

Child care is never an easy profession, no matter the group size or ratios involved and no rule is ever going to be appropriate for all situations. I worry about the alternative to offering some relief for business/income constraints when we know that providers choose to drop their regulation to care for

more children. Having the lived experience of caring for a larger group of children and seeing this done effectively in other homes as well, I avoid blanket statements about what can and can't be done effectively when it comes to the number of children for whom one individual can provide safe and quality care.

The regulation of large family child care centers

I am in support of this for the following reasons and with the following caveats:

- As a CCR&R operating in close proximity to Minnesota, The Parenting Place fields questions from parents wondering why the difference between group sizes in family child care settings across state lines and why what is considered safe in one state is not acceptable in another
- Injury data could be accessed to help discern whether increased ratios/group size decrease safety and should be considered before a final decision is made
- The proposed legislation includes a second caregiver which is not required in Minnesota and could reduce the positive financial impact to providers, but decrease concerns over the impacts on safety and quality
- This would offer providers the *choice*, not require them, to care for more children
- What concerns I have over increased stress on caregivers could be minimized by support from CCR&R organizations to provide education and connection opportunities for family child care providers

Allowing certified child care operators to provide care to up to six children

I generally support this bill for the following reasons and with the considerations listed:

- Reducing complexity would be very helpful in recruiting and retaining providers
- Children are children whether related or not, so should count equally in ratio
- This also offers a *choice*, not a requirement
- I believe total group size should not be more lenient than licensing when it comes to total group size when infants are in the group

Modifying administrative rules relating to assistant child care teachers.

While I have concerns over 16 year olds leading communications with families if they are the sole caregiver at drop-off or pick-up time, I support the option to hire at this age.

- Several high school programs prepare students to work in the field (ACCT, CCT, transcribed credit courses, Child Care Explorers) with no immediate path to work in child care unless they are 18. Eliminating the pause with a direct pathway to employment could retain the pipeline that is created by these programs.
- By the time students are 17 or 18, they've likely been working another job (retail, fast food, etc.) for a while with comparable, or even higher wages, making it less desirable to leave the jobs they are used to
- Parents often choose 16 year olds (and younger) to care for their children in the evening or as a summer option (and often pay more for this care than they do regulated child care)
- As with any age applicant, directors should carefully screen candidates to assess their ability to care for young children. Simply achieving a certain age does not make someone a fit to care for children

- I'm sure we could all think of examples of 16 year olds who have the maturity and skills to be an effective child care employee as well as adults who have no business serving children
- This would allow family members of child care owners to help in a way that benefits the program's financial viability

Modifying administrative rules regarding the number of child care workers and children in group child care centers

I believe we need more information from child care directors to make an informed decision about this bill. I have deep concerns over the impact of increasing ratios for our youngest children. Potentially increasing workload and the related stress could negatively impact the workforce challenges as well as the quality of care provided.

- Increasing ratios for employees who would likely see no immediate and direct effect on their wage does not provide the same incentive that increasing revenue via group size changes for family child care programs does
- Directors have told me, in no uncertain terms, that their teachers would quit if they were required to care for more children, especially given the increased behavior challenges they are seeing
- I personally don't see this working for younger ages (infants and toddlers especially) where one-on-one attention and the ability to hold children is crucial to their social-emotional development. Infant and toddler teachers are some of the hardest working people I have ever had the pleasure to meet and observe. I would defer to directors to weigh in on all ages, but personally see this as a potentially viable strategy only for older ages.
- CCR&R's could help collect targeted data from the child care field to inform this decision.

Assembly of Children & Families

Bill #LRB4197/LRB4238

Wednesday Sept. 6, 2023

11:00 a.m. Room 417

I am in support of these bills.

I am Kathleen Stachura, owner of Cuddle Care Inc. in Green Bay, WI. I have run my center since 1991 in our community. Cuddle Care partners with the Howard Suamico School District to offer 4K within our neighborhood.

I am in support of increasing the maximum group size and minimum number of child care workers for certain child age categories.

With the expiration of Child Care Counts, centers are struggling financially. This gives centers an option to increase the number of children per staff, which adds dollars to our budget. This is not an answer to the funds that we have lost, but it is a step in the right direction.

Assembly of Children & Families

Bill #LRB3294/LRB4237

Wednesday Sept. 6, 2023

11:00 a.m. Room 417

I am in support of these bills.

I am Kathleen Stachura, owner of Cuddle Care Inc. in Green Bay, WI. I have run my center since 1991 in our community. Cuddle Care partners with the Howard Suamico School District to offer 4K within our neighborhood.

I am in support of lower the age of an Assistant Child Care Teacher.

With the shortage of Child Care staff that currently exists in the State of Wisconsin, especially in rural areas, this may help some centers that are struggling with staffing. This would create an additional option for centers while maintaining the quality that they have worked to provide. This is not the answer to child care survival, since it will not help all centers, but it's a baby step.

Assembly Ways & Means Committee

Bill #LRB3528/LRB4243

Wednesday Sept. 6, 2023

10:00 a.m. Room 328

I am in support of these bills.

I am Kathleen Stachura, owner of Cuddle Care Inc. in Green Bay, WI. I have run my center since 1991 in our community. Cuddle Care partners with the Howard Suamico School District to offer 4K within our neighborhood.

I am in support of creating a child care reimbursement account program for families.

With the cost of child care increasing, due to our increased labor costs, parents are struggling with the weekly cost of childcare. Not all families have access to a flexible spending account; this would make it equal to all families. I feel that this will financially help our families that we serve.

September 6, 2023

Esteemed Representatives, Senators, and the Assembly Children and Families Committee:
I am writing on behalf of AB 390. (LRB-3294/1)

I am in full **SUPPORT** of this bill.

My name is Jennifer Trudell and I am the Howard-Suamico School District's 4K Coordinator, as well as the Administrator of The Shepherd's Kids Preschool. In said roles I oversee eight childcare programs, as well as directly supervise the staff and children at The Shepherd's Kids. It is vital to the economic sustainability in our community to offer a variety of childcare options for parents to access, so our school district chose to collaborate with the child care providers to offer 4K services.

During one of our monthly meetings a district administrator came to speak with the child care owners/directors about possibly hiring high school students that had finished the two required classes for becoming a child care assistant. It was noted that one of the programs had done just that and would have loved the option to hire more, but since that student still required direct supervision, it wasn't advantageous to do so. The school district administrator was baffled as to why we weren't able to utilize their students and we explained it was a state regulation. All seven programs wanted the option to hire a qualified high school student but it didn't make financial sense, since they couldn't be left alone with the younger children, despite having completed the classes.

I have had the pleasure of working alongside highly motivated 16 year-olds, as well as the less motivated ones, but it would be nice as an employer to have that option. The students that finish the courses are often willing to work for pay we can afford and may take the staffing burden off the scheduling process. It's yet another tool child care providers can choose to use if they need to.

To be clear, this bill will not solve our bigger problem of finding sustained funding, but it may help the rural communities or child care desert areas to find qualified staff for at least a few hours each week. With 75% of the child care programs being 3 Stars or less and thus receiving no Young Star bonus money, this may ease the staffing limitations they are facing.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jennifer Trudell



September 6, 2023

Chairman Snyder and Honorable members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families,

Thank you for allowing us to provide written comments on the bills before you today. Milwaukee Succeeds appreciates the Legislature's attention to the child care crisis that families and businesses in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin are facing. Without access to quality, affordable child care, the parents of young children can't participate in the workforce and children miss out on lifelong academic, social, and economic gains.

While we appreciate the attention to this pressing matter, the package of bills being considered today does not address the scope or urgency of the current child care crisis, nor does it respond to the loud, clear call from parents, early educators, and civic and business leaders in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin for significant state investment in the child care sector.

Moreover, some of the bills being considered would weaken efforts to ensure that all children have access to safe, high-quality child care and would accelerate child care staffing shortages. We strongly oppose any bill that would loosen important safety protections for children or undermine the quality of child care. Therefore, we oppose the following bills:

- **AB 390:** By reducing the age for child care assistant teachers to 16 and removing supervision requirements for these teachers, this bill would jeopardize child health and safety and reduce program quality.
- **AB 391:** By increasing child-to-teacher ratios in group child care settings, this bill would jeopardize child health and safety and reduce program quality. It would also drive early educator burnout and turnover even higher, thereby further limiting families' access to child care.
- **AB 392:** By increasing the number of children that certified child care providers can provide care to, this bill would undermine the important safety and quality guidelines within Wisconsin's child care licensing system.

In addition, we offer additional comments to the following bills:

- **AB 388:** \$15 million GPR to build capacity would be more effective if distributed as grants instead of loans.
- **AB 389:** Ensure that there is adequate safety of the children in this setting from a building code capacity

To conclude, we reiterate our request that the Legislature respond to the loud, clear call for a significant state investment from stakeholders and constituents in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin. Following the Legislature's decision not to invest in the proven, effective Child Care Counts program in the 2023-25 state budget, 86 percent of Wisconsin child care program directors and owners already are or are considering raising parent fees, 47 percent of early educators are considering leaving the field, and 32 percent of programs are considering closing. These profoundly damaging impacts on families and communities can only be prevented with significant, sustained public investment in child care.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent Lyles".

Vincent Lyles
Executive Director
Milwaukee Succeeds



Green County Child Care Network <greencccn@gmail.com>

Opposition to AB388, AB389, AB390, AB391, AB392

1 message

Green County Child Care Network <greencccn@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 6, 2023 at 9:50 AM

To: Rep.Snyder@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Goeben@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Bodden@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Dittrich@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Gundrum@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Penterman@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Pronschinske@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Wichgers@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Billings@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Vining@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Snodgrass@legis.wisconsin.gov, Rep.Madison@legis.wisconsin.gov
Cc: "Rep.Novak" <Rep.Novak@legis.wisconsin.gov>, Rep.Bare@legis.wisconsin.gov, "Rep.CAnderson" <Rep.CAnderson@legis.wisconsin.gov>, "Rep.Jacobson" <Rep.Jacobson@legis.wisconsin.gov>, Howard Marklein <Sen.Marklein@legis.wi.gov>, "Sen.Spreitzer" <Sen.Spreitzer@legis.wisconsin.gov>, "Sen.Hesselbein" <Sen.Hesselbein@legis.wisconsin.gov>



Assembly Children and Families Committee,

The Green County Child Care Network unilaterally opposes all of the bills that are being proposed this morning. We ask you to vote no. They will decrease quality, decrease accessibility as more teachers and family child care professionals will leave the field due to the extra stress on their minds and bodies, and decrease affordability as wages will have to continue to rise exponentially to recruit anyone willing to do this work. 16 year olds that are put into classrooms without the needed support will leave the field in droves and be less likely to enter the profession with this sort of experience. Also, look around they aren't baby-sitting anymore, they can do other work for far better pay and are choosing to do so. These bills are looking to 'warehouse' children and stuff as many in as few places as possible. That is the opposite of what we have been asking for. We have asked for the continuation of Child Care Counts as it has actually increased the number of regulated programs in our county for the first time since the 1990s, when we had over 90 regulated programs. We were down to upper-20s in 2021, we are now at 30. GCCCN and Green County Workforce Development surveyed all regulated child care programs in Green County and received a 90% response rate. See attached for those results and vote no today to this bill. We unilaterally and unequivocally support continuing Child Care Counts. We also welcome your committee to meet with our memberships. If interested please reply to this email to schedule.

Jillynn Niemeier Green County Child Care Network President

 **Green County Workforce Development and Green County Child Care Network Report on the status of child care in Green County.pdf**
268K



Green County Workforce Development and Green County Child Care Network Report on the status of child care in Green County

-Green County is considered a child care desert-there is 1 slot for every 3 children needing care. When the Green County Child Care Network was formed in 1992, there were over 90 regulated child care programs. Today there are 31 regulated providers in Green County. 2 new programs have opened this year

- Quality for all children and availability for children on Wisconsin Subsidy increased in Green County as 22 of 30 providers are now participating in Youngstar (required for accepting subsidy) and there are an additional 1 4 star center, and several 3 star centers.

-1 Family child care center closed permanently in June of 2023 and cited the loss of Child Care Counts as the major reason.

-Infants and toddlers are 17% average household annual income per child. (based on US census statistics). Affordable is 7% total for all children. In 2022 it was 13.7%.

-Green County's July 2023 unemployment rate is at 2.6% and the demographic is an aging population. According to childcaregap.org The economic impact due to the lack of care is about \$22 million dollars. The economic burden of America's child care gaps on households, businesses, and revenues. The annual impact indicates the immediate one-year impact of these gaps on the economy. This is calculated utilizing the following:

1. **-Household Impacts:** income losses parents incur from having to reduce their work hours or leave the labor force entirely, as well as future lost earnings from delayed opportunities for promotions, reduced work experience, and reentering the workforce at a lower station.
2. **-Business Impacts:** direct productivity losses such as hours of foregone worker productivity and continual pay and benefits paid to employees when they are not working, as well as future lost earnings from turnover costs and the delayed ability to capitalize on growth opportunities.
3. **-Tax Revenue Impacts:** the proportion of lost household and business income that would

have contributed to government revenues, as well as future lost tax revenues from future lost household and business earnings

Survey Results:

30 owners/administrators were surveyed by the Green County Workforce Development in cooperation with the Green County Child Care Network between August 15 and August 30, 2023 as 1 regulated program was excluded from the survey since they are a Head Start program which cannot charge tuition.

27/30 responded (90% return rate)

How much do you annually raise rates: (2 are brand new so na)

17 programs do not annually raise rates, 1 annually increases 1%, 2 annually increase 3%, 1 annually increase \$10 a week, 1 \$5 a month, 1 does between 1-2 dollars and one does 5% every other year.

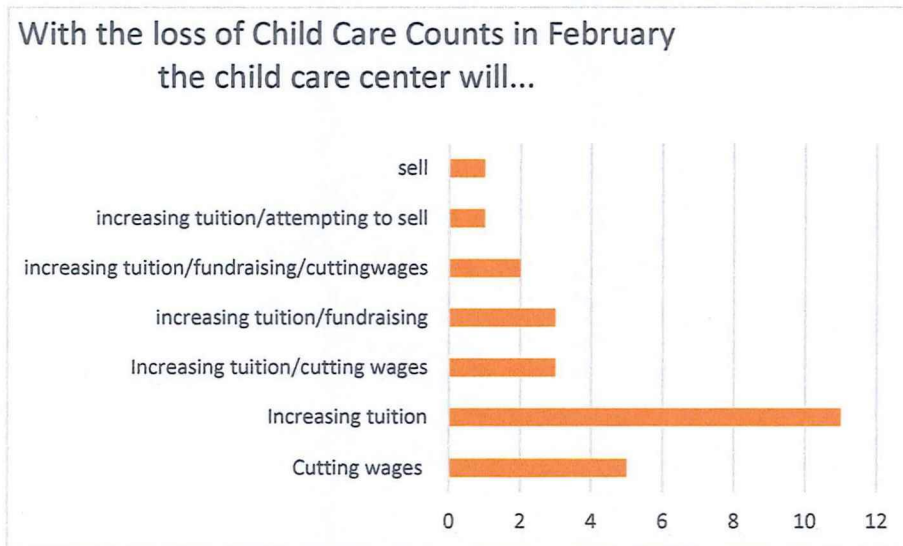
When was the last time you increased your rates: (2 are brand new so na)

7 programs have not increased rates since 2019, 3 in 2020, 4 in 2021, 1 in 2022, 9 in 2023

What percent was Child Care Counts of your revenue?

2 didn't participate since brand new

1-10% -2, 11-20%-8, 21-30%-9, 31-40%-3, 41-50%-2, I didn't participate-1



Full Time County average rates for all regulated programs

Age	Group Center 2022	Family Child Care 2022	Average for both	Current August 2023 amount	September- Dec rates 2023	Jan-May 2024	% increase after CCC ends
0-12 months	223.75	158.18	184.41	212.63	222.05	232.38	26%
12-24 months	223.75	158.18	184.41	210.86	221.55	231.88	26%
24-36 months	199.25	147.73	168.38	198.32	207.40	217.86	29%
36-54 months	188.75	147.73	164.14	194.41	203.48	212.92	23%
48-54 months in ½ day 4k	179.25	147.73	160.24	178.61	186.25	195.85	18%
School age wrap around	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Na	Range: \$4 an hour-\$180 before and after school	Range: \$4 an hour-\$180 before and after school	Range: \$4 an hour-\$185 before and after school	
School age when school is on break	162	149	154.20	\$180.28	187.81	196.08	21%

% increase of tuition was 5-6% in 2022 for those who raised rates. Remember inflation was 8%.

Daily County average rates for all regulated programs

Age	Current August Amount	September 2023	Jan-May 2024
0-12 months	59.86 (8 allow)	62.12	64.31
12-24 months	\$64.88 (9 allow)	66.87	68.78
24-36 months	59.93 (11 allow)	61.70	63.71
36-54 months	52.16 (11 allow)	57.35	59.54
48-54 months in ½ day 4k	na	na	na
School age wrap around (5-12)	range from \$7.50-\$46 a day	range from \$7.50-\$46 a day	Range from \$7.50 to \$48 a day

School age on non school days	\$35.91 (11 allow)	\$38.37	41.23
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Only 2 programs offer hourly drop in rates.

1 program offers the following: 3 year old preschool, 3 hours 2 days: Members: \$21.93; Non- \$26.56; preschool 3 hours

Family Child Care Providers and Group Center Owners/Administrators to asked to share what they used their Child Care Counts (CCC) funding on. Identified by zip code.

(53566) I was able to keep my rates lower due to child care counts. Erase my rates last year by fifth. An hour to cover the food program. As when I did, my rate increase was not sure. As when I did, my increase was not sure if you were gonna Have the ones here. So did not raise my rates this year to cover the food program two tired.

(53566) So many things for the children! Including but not limited to...updating our playground to also be more inclusive for ALL students and abilities, new indoor equipment that was replaced and worn from, MANY, MANY years of use. Supplies to navigate covid Including gloves, masks, cleaners to assist in keeping children and staff healthy and following guidelines.

(53574) I was able to pay for the increased costs of running my daycare. These costs included my liability insurance, utilities, food, and supplies.

(53566) We were able to give staff a \$300/month bonus. We were able to pay off the mortgage on the building the program is housed in and give staff a \$1.00/hr raise from eliminating that monthly cost. We were able to re-carpet the entire building (carpet was over 20 years old). We were able to re-do the entire parking lot of the center (parking lot had massive pot holes and drained to our back play area). We were able to buy a new stove/oven. We were able to buy a new water heater. We are able to put new windows and entrance doors in the center, which will significantly help with energy costs.

(53502) We replaced all of the storm windows in the building, installed new A/C unit, installed a new furnace, and purchased new supplies and equipment for all classrooms.

(53574) we were able to invest in amazing things for our program: more outside space for our kids, a new fence, finished our flooring, new indoor play structure, newer/developmentally appropriate toys, new washer and dryer, and a camera system.

(53574) When CCC was available, I was able to be more flexible with families when absent. I did not raise my rates with the decrease of funding. But I am no longer able to be as flexible with absences. Families are still charged to hold their childcare spot.

(53566) We were able to give monthly bonus to our staff to help keep them not only at our center, but also to remain working in the childcare field.

(53574) I kept my rates steady and used the extra revenue to offset increased inflation costs, I gave quarantine rates, didn't charge when I was closed due to covid, I hired substitutes so I could go to appointments and get paperwork done during the week and not have to close and actually had Saturdays "off" My own hourly wage after expenses went up as well.

(53520) Improve and enhance classrooms, provide staff with paid trainings and bonuses, buy extras.

(53566) Child care counts allowed us to keep tuition low for our parents and the bonus allowed my husband to stop working and start being involved 100% in the day care

(53566) The Child Care Counts grant allowed us to give our staff monthly bonuses without having to break our pocket book. We were also able to replace many necessary items needed to enhance our classrooms. The CCC grant has helped us to be able to add more diverse items into our classrooms as well.

(53520) I am letting things settle and will re evaluate

(53570) I was able to buy toys, furniture (pack & plays, high chairs etc.), art supplies, cleaning supplies, pay bills, and put money into my savings for my retirement. This money helped me out so much, I don't know what I'm going to do without it. I've been thinking very strongly about quitting. I honestly do think it's important to continue with the Child Care Counts program. You can ask any parent "What's the most important thing in your life?" Every single time they will say "My children." Yet most providers barely earn enough to make ends meet. We are taking care of some of the most important things in the world! I think our government should be doing more to help us out. It's really way overdue! Those Child Care Counts payments were a great start. And increasing our food program money amount helped a lot too. (I may drop out of that now. Too much computer work for a small amount of money). I've been doing in-home child care for about 35 years now. If I had to do it all over again....I wouldn't. And if a young person asks me my opinion on if they should start their own daycare? I tell them "DON'T DO IT!" You'll put in 11-12 hour days (plus more time after hours), working your tail off and barely make ends meet. And if you want to retire by 65? "HA!"

I think if the Child Care Counts program and food program reimbursement increases don't continue, our state and country is going to be in big trouble. Childcare is going to be very hard to find. Especially good childcare. Some children will end up going to unsafe, unregulated homes. I don't even want to think about what that could mean.

Ya know, when somebody asks me what I do for a living, and I say In-home daycare...almost everyone reply's with the same comment...."I don't know how you do it! I could never do that. " I do pray that the Child Care Counts and Food program payment increases continue. If the do end, I will probably close my doors in 2024.

Thank you for your time and I do hope this is taken seriously. Because Child Care does Count!

(53566) First few rounds (not monthly), I was able to replace my fence, which no longer met code and get rid of broken outdoor play equipment and replace it. I also replaced the carpet in the children's bathroom with a nice vinyl flooring that is easier to clean.

Monthly amounts: bought a first-rate curriculum to use, bought new learning materials, paid my business insurance, etc. For the staff "bonus" funds I was able to save enough \$\$ to travel home to Ohio this summer and see my family for the first time in 4 years.

(53566) kept my rates reasonable for families

(53520) Provide quality care and not raise rates for families

(53566) It helped pay child care bills, curriculum, supplies, food replace toys, and utilities.

(53570) Increased wages to retain teachers. Avoided rate increases while the cost of everything went up. Building maintenance that was put off was able to be completed.

(53566) Paid teacher's higher wages (3-4 dollars more per hour). We got Health and Dental packages. Sign-on bonuses.

(53574) With the funding, we were able to increase the teachers wages, and have not been charging the teachers' children tuition.

(53574) We were able to invest in better storage for toys, more stimulating games and toys, and more supplies in general. we were also able to invest in a shuttle bus!

(53566) We were able to give staff a \$300/month bonus. We were able to pay off the mortgage on the building the program is housed in and give staff a \$1.00/hr raise from eliminating that monthly cost. We were able to re-carpet the entire building (carpet was over 20 years old). We were able to re-do the entire parking lot of the center (parking lot had massive pot holes and drained to our back play area). We were able to buy a new stove/oven. We were able to buy a new water heater. We are able to put new windows and entrance doors in the center, which will significantly help with energy costs.

(53502) With a Childcare accounts funding, I was able to continue to give quality care to the children in my program without increasing my rates to the families. I also use the money to increase my pay. I was also able to supplement my program with high-quality materials and improve the environment.

Michaella Lawrence
9100 N Alpine Lane
Brown Deer, WI 53223

To Rep. Joy Goeben and Assembly Children and Family Committee:

I am Michaella Lawrence, a Senior at Luther Prep High School in Watertown, WI. Luther Prep is a boarding school that I live at during the school year.

I started working at a daycare, Little Sprouts, in Ixonia, Wisconsin in November 2022 through the end of the school year in May 2023. It brought me great joy to play with the kids after school, creating many fun activities for them to do. I would be assigned to rooms with grade schoolers, preschoolers, toddlers, and infants. We would play fun games in the classroom, participate in certain art activities, dancing, and playing outside. It was one of the best jobs I could ask for, learning at a young age on how to care for young children properly and safely and how to grow relationships with them in and outside the classrooms. This was a great benefit for me and will also be a great benefit for other young girls hoping to work in childcare centers.

The staff at Little Sprouts provided me with the tools and training necessary to care for the children there. I interacted with their parents as well and provided them updates when asked or promoted. There is nothing stopping someone my age from working there if they are trained well and have the right work ethic and attitude.

Sincerely,
Michaella Lawrence