



Wisconsin Early
Childhood Association

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WECA Applauds Governor's Priorities of Early Childhood, Workforce Growth in State of the State

MADISON, WIS. – Wisconsin Early Childhood Association appreciates Gov. Tony Evers' focuses on early care and education and their clear connection to workforce challenges shared in last night's State of the State Address.

WECA agrees with the Governor that the state's child care challenges remain prevalent, with working families, early childhood educators, and businesses suffering the effects.

"We applaud the continued spotlight Gov. Evers has placed on child care," said WECA Executive Director Ruth Schmidt. "These are challenges that have been long known, made worse by the pandemic, and continue today. We agree there must be a significant state investment of revenue because child care is a workforce issue – in addition to simply good public policy that helps young children thrive, supports healthy families, and is infrastructure that holds up all communities."

WECA and a coalition of multi-sector partners advocated for a \$300 million investment during the state budget cycle to continue Child Care Counts, a federal pandemic relief-funded payment program for sustaining child care business operations. It was after the state Legislature did not allocate any funding for the program that Evers directed an emergency \$170 million to the program to continue it through mid-2025.

While important, it is only a short-term measure that does not address the long-term challenges, as he noted in the State of the State. Wisconsin loses an estimated \$1.9 million a year in economic productivity due to the state's child care challenges, while it's also proven there is at least a 13 percent return on investment when putting dollars into high-quality early education.

"A growing number of people from all across our state recognize the importance of investing in high-quality early care and education because it supports young children, working families, the economy, and our communities," Schmidt said. "We look forward to keeping the conversation going and the pressure on for Wisconsin joining a series of other states in making significant investments into the child care sector."

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About Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)

WECA is a leading state non-profit organization, founded in 1971, that supports and advocates for the early childhood workforce and early care and education in Wisconsin. It is the state affiliate of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). A statewide organization with local reach, WECA administers and leads several key programs for child care providers and programs.