

# **“Women’s Work”**

**Challenges for Families, the  
Child Care Workforce, and a  
Vision for Wisconsin’s Future**

**weca** Wisconsin Early  
Childhood Association



# WECA's Role and Reach

- Founded in 1971 to provide the first statewide conferences for child care providers
- Exists to support the early childhood workforce and early care and education in Wisconsin
- Statewide organization with significant local reach and impact
- Administers key programs and services, advances advocacy efforts, and provides professional development opportunities



# WECA By the Numbers: Wisconsin and All Tribal Nations

**28,300**

early educators are served  
by at least one WECA  
program or initiative

**3,450**

early childhood programs are  
served by at least one WECA  
program or initiative

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# A Story of Child Care Challenges





A group of diverse children and adults are gathered in a circle, some holding hands. A teal circle is overlaid in the center, containing the text "Considerations of Gender, Race, and Equity".

**Considerations  
of Gender, Race,  
and Equity**

# Wisconsin's Early Childhood Workforce

**98%** of early childhood educators are women

**83%** have some form of higher education

**32%** of family child care providers identify as non-white

Source: Study of Wisconsin's Early Care and Education Workforce (2021)



# In Milwaukee: Experiences of Black and Brown Providers

**61%** of providers identify  
as Black or Brown

**45%** live in a household  
receiving public  
health benefits

**40%** receive FoodShare  
benefits

**76%** have some form of  
higher education

**27%** have a bachelor's  
degree or higher

# The Benefits of Early Childhood Education

*90% of brain development takes place before age 5. High-quality care leads to:*

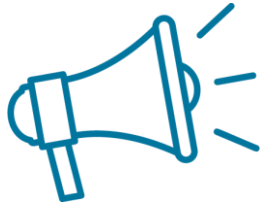
- Increased high school graduation and college attendance rates
- Better physical health outcomes
- Higher income and employment attainment by age 40



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# Child Care Challenges



- The ECE workforce is significantly undercompensated and continues to experience its own staffing crisis.



- Care options are costly and difficult to access. Deserts are prevalent.
- Child care operates in a failed market.



- This prompts widespread workforce and economic implications.

# Statewide Care Decline: 2013 to Present

**30%**

decrease in regulated child  
care programs

**44%**

decrease in regulated  
family child care programs

**54%**

of Wisconsin is a child  
care desert

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**“Child care is a textbook example  
of a broken market.”**

**-U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen**



**Child Care  
Financing Today**



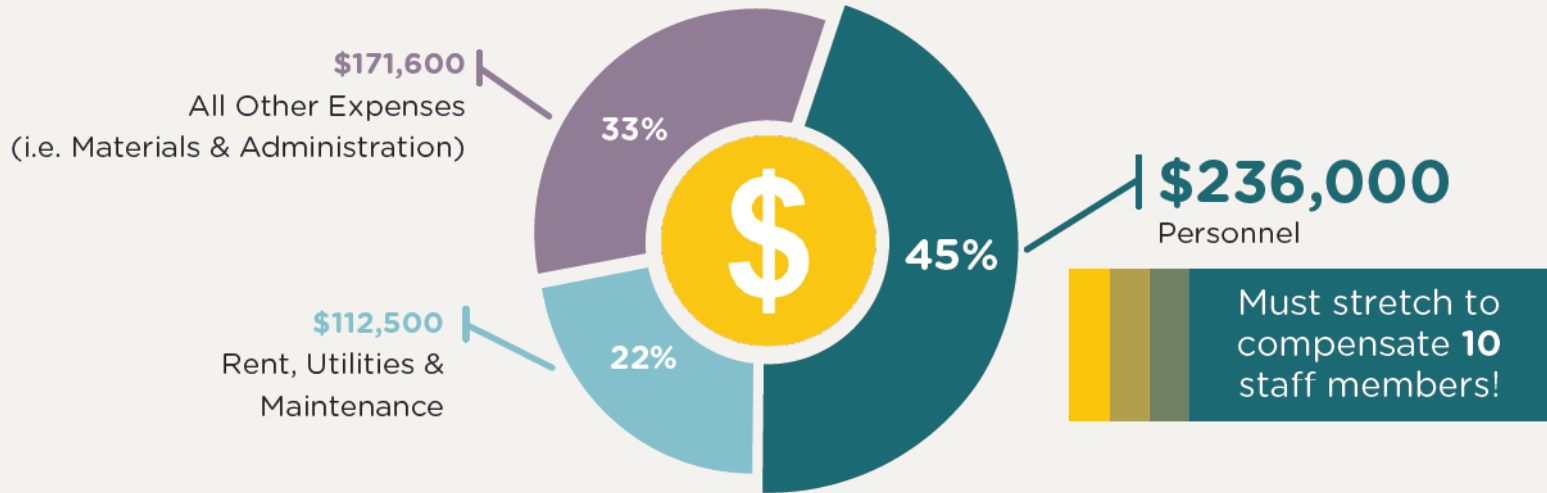
**Parent Fees**



# Market Failure

The center collects \$520,000 in parent fees.

## Center Budget Overview



This means staff members earn an average of \$23,600 a year, or \$11.34 an hour. This does not leave room for standard benefits, like health insurance or retirement contributions.

# 263%

increase in child care costs since 1990.

This far outpaces inflation (133%).

# How Much is Left After Paying for Child Care and Basic Monthly Expenses?

**-\$1,597**

**Crawford  
County**

**-\$3,309**

**Milwaukee  
County**

**-\$2,128**

**Barron  
County**

Sources: WECA/Committee for Economic Development Child Care Affordability Calculator

# Employer, Economic Implications





# 59%

**Wisconsin's women's labor force participation rate has dropped below 60% for the first time since the 1980s.**

Source: High Road Strategy Center, Formerly Known as Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)

# Working Mothers Drive Wisconsin's Economy

**70%** of WI babies have mothers who work  
vs. 62% national average

**85%** of registered nurses are women

**77%** of public school teachers are women

Moms are more likely to quit or be reprimanded by their supervisor for missing work due to child care issues.

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# Child Care Costs Employers ... In Major Ways

**3:1**

ratio of women to men who lost their jobs during the pandemic. Women are first to leave the workforce when lacking accommodations due to child care challenges.

It costs an employer up to

**4x**

an employee's annual salary to backfill their position if they leave the workforce after giving birth.

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# Employer Views on Child Care

**73%**

of WI business owners say lack of affordable child care will prompt workforce shortages now and in the future.

**64%**

of WI business owners say all employers should consider supporting their employees with their child care needs

**Yet only ...**

**29%**

offer an employer-sponsored Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

**13%**

offer employer FSA contribution and/or match

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**“Employers might have a role in an idealized child care system. It is my contention that whatever direct role they play must be subordinate to their active support of a publicly funded system. Employers are not a sustainable core solution for the problem of child care.”**

**-Elliot Haspel, Child and Family Policy Expert**

# **The Influence and Impact of Philanthropy**



# Funding Services and Leveraging Influence for Systems Change







**Advocacy,  
Coalition  
Building, and  
Vision for the  
Future**

# Still Waiting ...

***“It is the Committee’s vision for Wisconsin that, in the near future, there will be affordable, high-quality child care and early education services available for all children, in various settings ... Affordable child care is child care offered on a sliding fee basis, such that no parent or family is required to spend more than 10% of their income for child care services.”***

**-Vision Statement, Wisconsin Legislative Special Committee on Child Care Economics, 1994**

# 2023-25 State Budget Session



Child Care  
Advocacy Day,  
April 2023

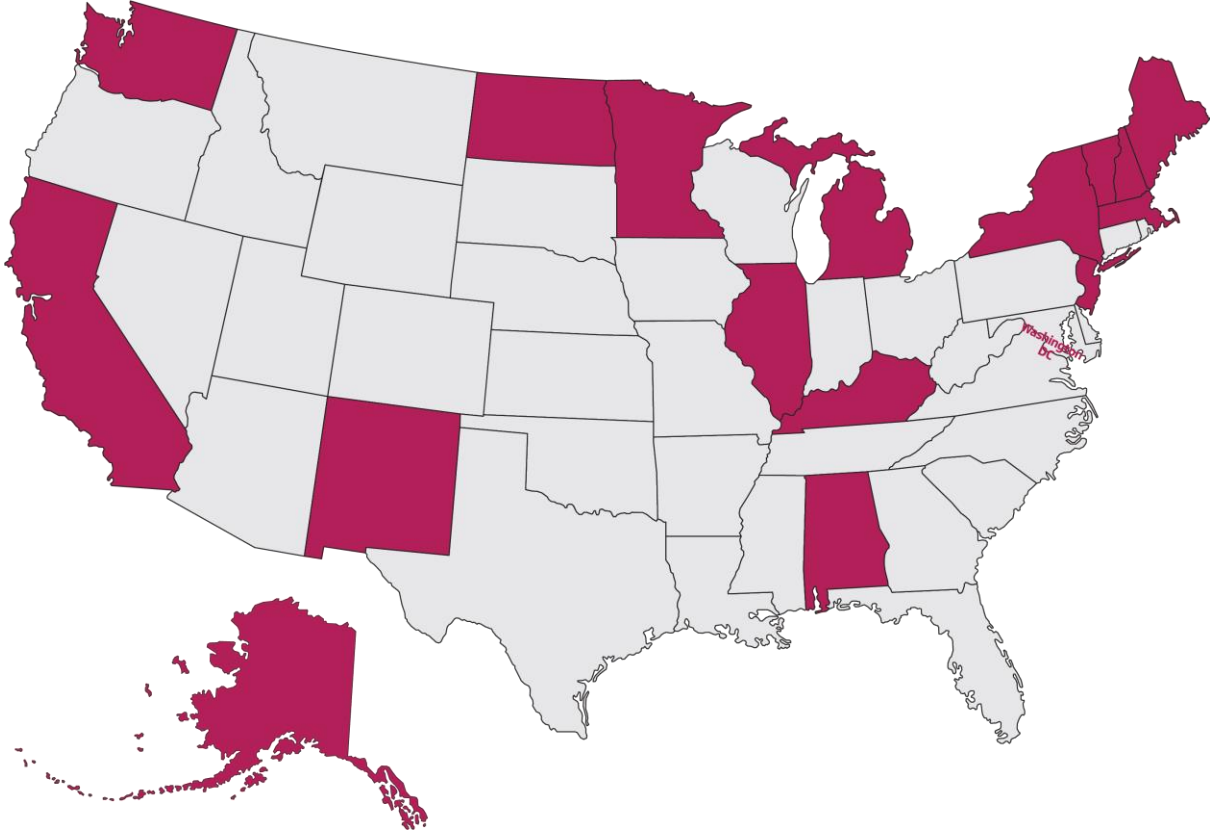
Gov. Evers  
with WECA  
Conference  
Attendees,  
Oct. 2023



State Sen. Jesse  
James (R-Altoona)  
and Rep. Pat Snyder  
(R-Schofield), Child  
Care Advocacy Day,  
April 2023

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# U.S. Progress: Child Care Investments







**Child Care  
Financing: The Vision  
for the Future**



**Government  
Funding**



**Employers**



**Parents**





**After all, if we can subsidize the cost of a burger and a glass of milk, we can fund a more sustainable future for children and families, right?**

**If child care is recognized as a  
public good and we advance  
long-term systems change, we can  
shift to a world where ...**



- **Children, families, communities, and the government have significant returns on investment.**



- **Care is affordable for working families.**



- **High-quality care is accessible across the state.**



- **The early childhood workforce earns livable wages and has access to benefits.**



- **Working mothers, the economy, and communities thrive.**

Thank you.  
Questions?



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