



Wednesday, March 26th, 2021

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

The above-named businesses, organizations, and partners in Wisconsin’s business community urge you to create Child Care Strong, a critical statewide investment in Wisconsin’s child care sector that will support families, communities, and the economy.

High-quality child care is a powerful economic development strategy, allowing parents of young children to participate in the workforce. However, many Wisconsin working families live in areas where there is not enough available child care or the cost is prohibitively expensive. At times, child care can cost more than a family’s mortgage. Without affordable, accessible, high-quality child care, many parents are forced to make the difficult choices of working fewer hours, altering work schedules, or leaving the workforce entirely. We know women leave the workforce at higher rates than men due to the lack of child care. This is concerning given that over 70% of infants in Wisconsin have mothers in the workforce.

Hiring demands across the state continue to increase as Wisconsin's economy grows, but the labor pool is not growing at that same rate. Many applicants have no option but to seek first shift work because that is the only time when child care is available. However, in a thriving economy, not all work in production and distribution centers can be completed during first shift. For example, workers who start their shift before 7:00 a.m. are unable to use most child care programs. Parents who work outside traditional business hours struggle to arrange care, putting enormous stress on families.

The high cost and limited availability of care negatively impacts businesses across our state. When workers are absent due to child care issues, productivity is impacted and labor costs increase if other employees must work overtime to maintain consistent productivity levels. If Wisconsin businesses are unable to hire staff, the economy will not be able to thrive.

Large companies are increasingly considering opening onsite child care for employees due to the lack of availability in the community; however, child care is an expense most businesses – especially small and mid-sized – cannot take on. Subsidizing the costs of a facility, maintenance, insurance and staffing in order to have care that is affordable for employees can be a steep expense. Mid-size and small Wisconsin businesses do not have the same resources and will continue to struggle to compete for talent.

The shortage of child care across Wisconsin impacts entire communities. Wisconsin families need access to quality, affordable child care to participate in the workforce and our businesses need a stable workforce with access to quality affordable child care in order to operate and grow. The child care business model does not work within normal supply and demand economics. The future of Wisconsin's children, Wisconsin's businesses, and Wisconsin's economy are at stake.

We request your support in creating Child Care Strong, a statewide program that will contribute to a sustainable child care infrastructure, allowing families to work and communities to thrive.

Respectfully,

Tim Sheehy, President, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce

Wendy Whitehead, Director of Rewards & HR Service Delivery, Kwik Trip, Inc.

Christine Kenyon, Managing Director, M3 Insurance

Jonas Prising, Chairman & CEO, ManpowerGroup Inc.

Eric Hartwig, Director of Workplace Services, Organic Valley

Chris Hardie, CEO, 7 Rivers Alliance

Reva Witte, HR Manager, Regal Beloit Corporation

Shawn Phetteplace, State Manager, Main Street Alliance

Ed Paradowski, CEO, VES-Artex

Danae Davis, Executive Director, Milwaukee Succeeds

Marianne Torkelson, VP Business Development & Training, Co-op Credit Union

Emily Murray, Part-owner and Psychotherapist, Avenues Counseling, LLC

Megan Schilt, Clinical Director, Psychotherapist, Consultant Avenues Counseling, LLC

Joshua Rabel, Realtor, C21 Affiliated

Evan Dannells, Chef Owner, Cadre Restaurant

Ashley Harrell, Program Director for COA Youth and Family Centers, COA Youth and Family Centers

Stephen W. Smith, COO/Interim CEO, Community Health Systems, Inc.

Laura Waldvogel, CEO, Family Health La Clinica

Barb Tengesdal, Director, First 5 Fox Valley

Susan Finkel-Hoffman, Family Outreach Navigator, First Five Fox Valley

Angela Steuck, Vice-President, Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin
Julia Taylor, President, Greater Milwaukee Committee
Cara Carper, Executive Director, Green County Development Corporation
JoAnne Anton, Director, Herb Kohl Philanthropies
Salvador L. Carranza, Past President, Latino Education Council
Melissa Even, Executive Director, Monroe Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Rizwanullah Arain, President, Neurodiagnostic Clinic
Rebekah Stauffacher, Executive Director, New Glarus Chamber of Commerce
S Mark Tyler, Chairman, OEM Fabricators, Inc.
Theresa M. St. Lawrence, Impact & Outreach Specialist, Oshkosh Area United Way
Constance Annette Palmer, President & CEO, Outreach Community Health Centers
Jenni Sevenich, CEO, Progressive Community Health Centers
Mark Sabljak, Co-founder, Sabljak & Budisch
Nancy Armbrust, Retired, VP Education & Community Relations, Schreiber Foods, Inc
Nancy J. Jones, President, Stronger Together Fox Valley
Patricia Arriola, Director, United Community Center
Wendy Hein, Program Director, Valley Packaging Industries - Early Intervention
Allison Laverty Montag, Community Health Strategist, Winnebago County Health Department
Lisa Coombs-Gerou, VP Operations, YMCA Metropolitan Milwaukee
William H. Hughes Ph.D.
Ruth Schmidt, Executive Director, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association