

Wisconsin's Early Care and Education (ECE) Crisis: The problem threatening our state's workforce, economic stability and future prosperity.

Early care education needs to be a choice

Currently, far too many Wisconsin families do not have a choice in the early care and education for their children; whether it be the choice for a parent to stay home with their young child or choosing the right local group or family Early Childhood Education (ECE), 6 weeks–7 years. For most, the option for one parent to stay home is just not economically feasible. Choices are extremely limited or nonexistent for working families who need care for their child(ren) to work. Childcare is simply not accessible. Over half of Wisconsin (70% in rural) is a child care desert (meaning for every one child care slot available in the community there are three or more children who may need it). Childcare is also not affordable. The federal definition of affordable child care is a total of 7% household income (for all children), only 6.5% of Wisconsin families can “afford” an infant in care! In fact, the average two income Wisconsin households spend 17% of their income on childcare for one child, more than typical housing and nearly twice as much as in-state college tuition. Families also need to be able to choose ECE programming that aligns with their values and beliefs; reflecting and affirming family values and culture is considered a hallmark of high quality early education, critical to a child's healthy development. The decline in faith-based care in the state is further evidence that parents do not have a choice in their child's education. According to the Center for Public Justice, “One of the most pressing challenges for faith-based providers is the lack of fit between what families can pay in tuition and what providers need to cover costs, particularly staff costs. Interventions that boost compensation for child care work would help faith-based child care providers as it would the entire sector.”

The Mechanics of Supply and Demand do not work with Childcare

Education is a public good, it is necessary for the “smooth functioning of society—economically and politically” (Stanford). Because 90% of brain development occurs prior to the age of 5 years, ECE profoundly affects the trajectory of an individual's life and can be considered the most influential years of education. Subsequently, these educational years have the heaviest impact on our economy. In the immediate sense, ECE allows parents to participate in the workforce and longitudinal studies repeatedly confirm ECE's high return on investment (recent research from Heckman Foundation shows a \$17 return on every public dollar invested in ECE). ECE is failing because the simple supply and demand model does not work on public goods costing Wisconsin's economy 4.2-6.4 billion a year. Lacking sufficient public investment in ECE, parent tuition alone is currently funding the childcare system, and families cannot afford the true cost of quality childcare. This means providers are only able to set rates at what the market will bear, not at the price actually needed to run a quality education family child care business or group/head start with enough qualified staff. Like all other public goods, ECE requires state investments to be functional.

The childcare crisis cannot fall on Employers.

Some employers have been able to work with childcare education organizations to offer childcare opportunities for its employees. While this may work for that larger business it is not feasible for the majority of businesses in Wisconsin, particularly small businesses and businesses in rural communities. In addition, this does not allow families the choice of early education programs that align with their values and beliefs. Employers are not the solution to the ECE crisis, it will only create more inequity across the state, particularly for rural communities. Without smart investments like Child Care Counts, more working families will opt to leave our state for those with more family friendly conditions. For example, taking a job in a neighboring state such as Minnesota where they have made substantial investments in the ECE field: “Minnesota's economy has not only surpassed Wisconsin's in size but more importantly in economic

measurements that indicate a higher standard of living in Minnesota than Wisconsin” (2021, M Employment and Economic Development)

Deregulation you say?

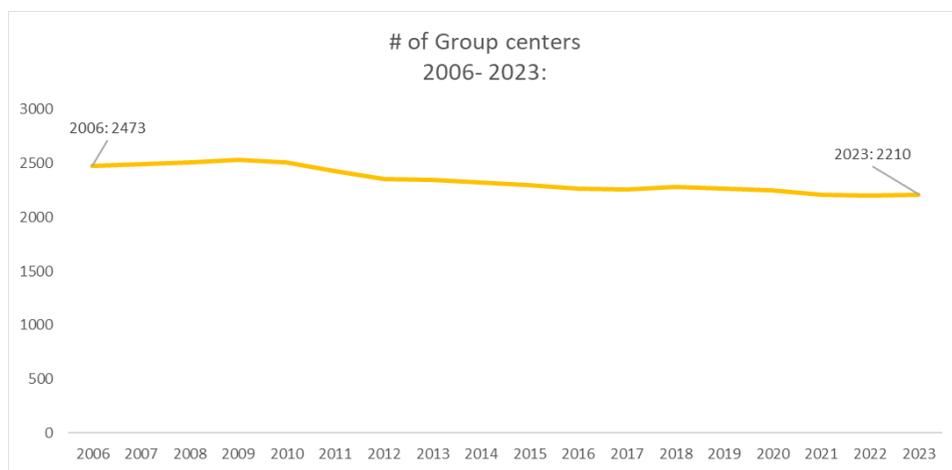
Yes and no. Increase the ratio to teacher capacity? Absolutely not. Right now the ratio for under 2 year old children is 1:4. The experts recommend 1:3 for quality care. Teachers will not accept caring for 5 babies, nor should families in Wisconsin accept it. This concept will result in decreasing the number of slots available for under 2 years and lead to infant safety concerns within care settings. With that said, there is room for improvement along the lines of regulation within licensing requirements. For example, in order for the state to receive Federal funds, FBI fingerprint background checks must be completed. However, Wisconsin goes a step further and requires yearly state background checks. Additionally, the costs of the background checks are entirely placed on the childcare business. The most effective way to identify and effectively amend the regulatory system for Wisconsin’s childcare businesses is to bring the early education workforce to the policy table, and WECAN’s network of over 1000 early childhood stakeholders are ready to participate in this conversation once the budget has passed with Child Care Counts intact!

You feel the funding request is a “band-aid.”

Yes, this is correct. The \$340 million budget request over the next two years is not a fix, it is only to try and stabilize the field. In the report you will find a chart demonstrating that childcare supply has stabilized over the past 2 years. The average group center/head start teacher average wage went from \$10.66 an hour in 2021 to \$12.66 an hour in 2022 (2022 is when Child Care Counts began with part B funds going directly towards wages) with Family Child care hourly earnings being even lower. Without the requested Child Care Counts funds in the next state budget, the pattern of ongoing program closures will once again proliferate and less and less children statewide will have access to safe stable care. In fact, recent surveys indicate that the rate of closures will be significantly higher than before Covid and the stimulus-funded subsidies. This will throw our state’s workforce and economy into a tailspin According to The Heritage Foundation, “Taxpayer dollars should help students to succeed with a great education.” We need to decide as a state what our priorities are. The Constitution requires that all kids be given equal educational opportunity no matter what their race, ethnic background, religion, or sex, or whether they are rich or poor. The early years are the most critical time of education, laying the foundational skills that enable individuals to achieve success throughout the rest of their education and future career. In order for the state to support those critical years of education and allow Wisconsin families the freedom of educational choice, it is imperative our Legislature includes \$340 million for Child Care Counts in this state budget. Millions of families with young children, child care workers, and business owners who need a strong dependable workforce are relying on this! The requested Child Care Counts funding in the 23-25 budget will stop our state from suffering even more loss of child care supply while a more permanent policy solution can be worked on at the state and national level.

Statewide Survey Results: FILTERED BY GROUP AND HEAD START ONLY

Survey responses to Wisconsin Early Childhood Action Needed (WECAN) survey “Monthly Child Care Counts Funding” to owners/directors/administrators of Wisconsin Group/Head Start and Family Child Care programs between 4/5-4/24 (531 total respondents, not all answered every question, and the two added questions on 4/19 were in direct response to the announced changes from round 3 of Child Care Counts). Respondents to the survey prior to 4/19 were sent the 2 additional questions to answer separately and added into the results. WECAN (www.wecanaction.com) is a statewide group of child care businesses, educators, parents, community members and employers created in Spring of 2020 by Corrine Hendrickson, Family Child Care Business owner and Brooke Skidmore, co-owner and Administrator of a Group Center in rural Wisconsin. There are over 1000 individuals on the mailing list. If you have further questions please send to wecanaction@gmail.com. Tuition and child care center business data was received from Supporting Families Together Association <https://supportingfamilies.together.org/>



Current state of child care in the state

Currently, according to www.childcaregap.org in Wisconsin: 288,430 children have the potential need for child care. There is a supply of 171,040 child care slots. The families of 117,090 children do not have access to child care. Child care gap: 40.6% of the potential need (RURAL areas are most in need). The long term economic impact ranges between \$4.2B and \$6.4B

311 Group and Head Start Survey respondents stated:

How many empty slots do you currently have due to lack of teachers? 311 businesses responding with 5463 total throughout the state

97 child care businesses responded that they have shortened hours due to lack of staff

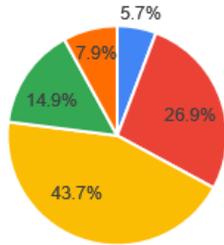
11 are open only 4 days a week

72 inform parents on occasion rooms are closed due to no staff (sometimes that morning)

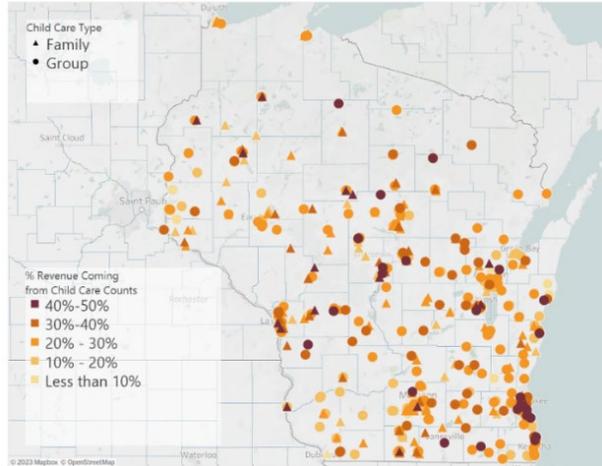
26 no longer offer overnight or weekend care

% revenue of child care business was Child Care Counts in 2022

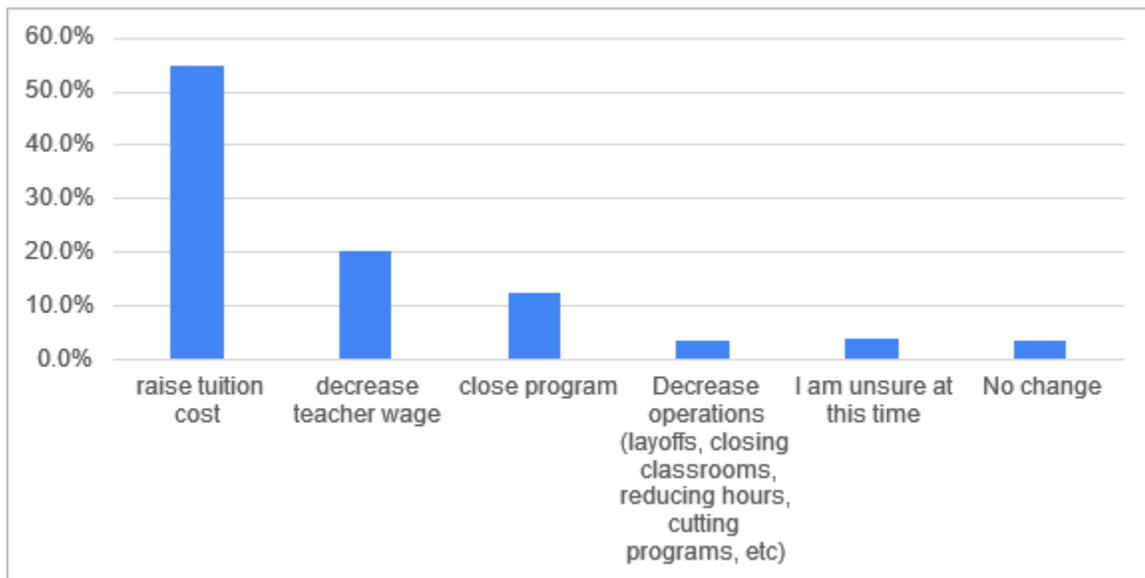
Group Center Child Care Counts Percent of Revenue



■ Less than 10% ■ 10% - 20% ■ 20% - 30% ■ 30%-40% ■ 40%-50%



How will you make up that revenue if Child Care Counts is cut by 50% in June and ends completely in January? *2 Separate survey questions, but very close to the same answers, Head Start doesn't charge tuition, so increasing tuition costs are not an option for those programs.



Option #1 Raise rates

Current average tuition rates by Child Care Resource and Referral Regional Area :

Region	Average Group Center Rate	Range
Southern	\$238.78	\$156.67 - \$350.41
Southwest	\$202.21	\$166.40 - \$235
Western	\$219.95	\$135 - \$251.65
Northwest	\$171.25	\$100 - \$175
Northeast	\$223.26	\$126 - \$262.48
Central	\$204.02	\$150 - \$243.78
East	\$231.16	\$151.67 - \$269.80
Southeast	\$277.79	\$206.33 - \$313.95

Projected average tuition rates with Child Care Counts Revenue Percent from chart on page 2:

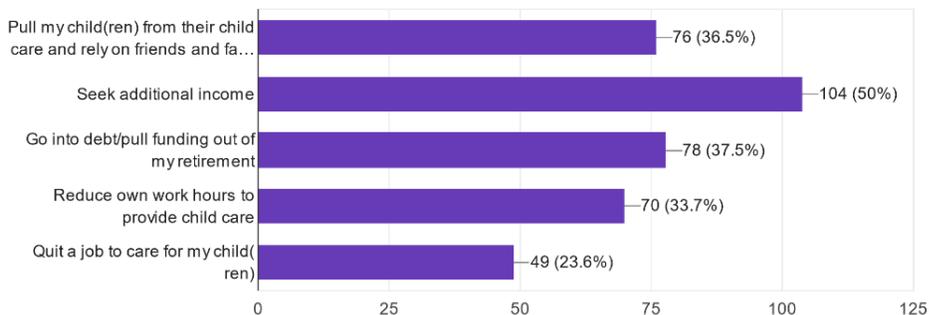
	Current	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%
Southern	\$238.78	\$262.66	\$286.54	\$310.41	\$334.29	\$358.17
Southwest	\$202.21	\$222.43	\$242.65	\$262.87	\$283.09	\$303.32
Western	\$219.95	\$241.95	\$263.94	\$285.94	\$307.93	\$329.93
Northwest	\$171.25	\$188.38	\$205.50	\$222.63	\$239.75	\$256.88
Northeast	\$223.26	\$245.59	\$267.91	\$290.24	\$312.56	\$334.89
Central	\$204.02	\$224.42	\$244.82	\$265.23	\$285.63	\$306.03
East	\$231.16	\$254.28	\$277.39	\$300.51	\$323.62	\$346.74
Southeast	\$277.79	\$305.57	\$333.35	\$361.13	\$388.91	\$416.69

Per child Earnings for parents will need to increase by \$.50-\$4 an hour to cover this difference, many will be forced to stay home because they can't afford care or will pull their child from regulated care and friends, family, and neighbors will be further relied upon and adjust their work schedules accordingly. The larger % increases will be in the regions that have lower rates due to the lower amounts the market will tolerate, therefore, higher child care counts percent of revenue.

A Parent survey currently being conducted by WECAN (4/29-5/2) shows that even a 10-20% increase in rates results in the following: (These parents pulling their children from regulated care will then force child care programs to increase tuition even further or decrease wages).

If rates increase 10-20% per child, I will

208 responses

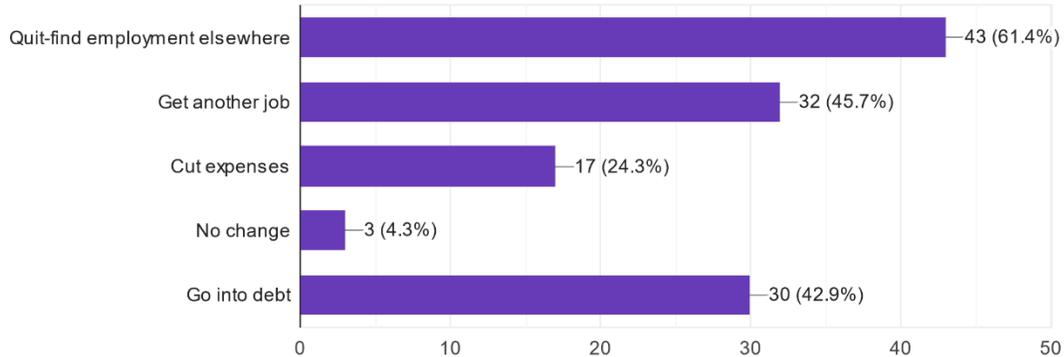


Option #2 Decrease Wages

A Child Care Professional survey currently being conducted by WECAN (4/29-5/2) shows that decreasing wages will result in the following:

If my wages/bonus are reduced I will do the following (check all that apply)

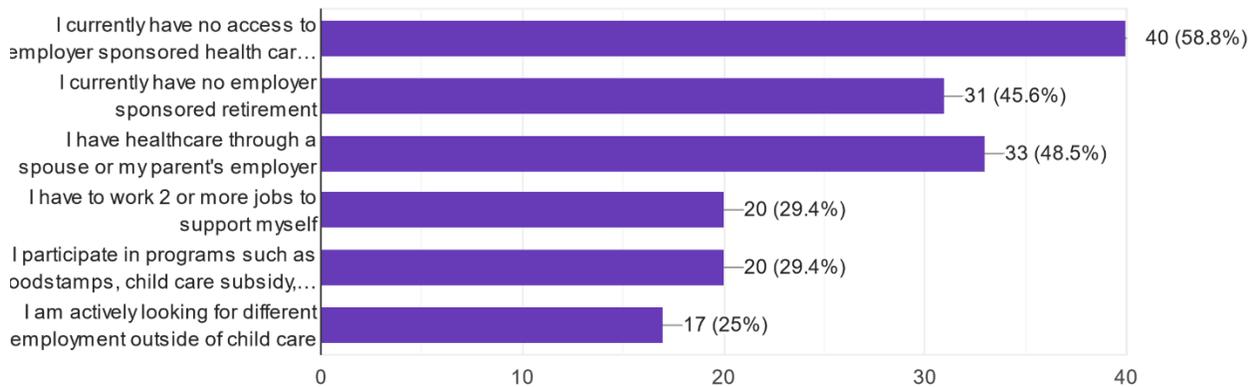
70 responses



And the lack of wages already impacts the professional educators in the following ways:

Select the following that apply to you (check all that apply)

68 responses



So decreasing wages even further would result in more closures of classrooms, creating a vicious cycle.

Option #3 Close:

48 Anticipated closures affect 2,324 children with an additional 21 programs anticipating that raising tuition, decreasing wages will still probably result in imminent closure affecting an additional 1897 children.

Group Center/Head Start Owners/Administrators reponse below to the following question:

“Please provide any details or stories of your situation or experiences that you would like to share.”

(All Responses sorted by zip code and only na or nothing ones were not included)

(53532) We don't know what this hardship will mean for our families. We do know this will force many mom's to leave the workforce and increase our difficulties in staffing here in WI. As it is I can not compete with Kwik Trip just four blocks from here (and three more in our area). I worry how our economy can continue without a major crash without mom's working, how many homes will go into foreclosure and more foreseeable shortages of materials, health care access limitations, noone to stock or check you out at grocery stores, and more. Restaurants will close as their staff need care and we will see a 25% reduction in available care after a significant loss already in 2020 and 2021. Child Care Counts is vital to our economy in WI!

(53572) Our center has used the ChildCareCounts money to give our staff higher starting wages and/or bonuses and purchase things for our center to help increase the quality of care for the children in our center. If we had to lose the all the CCC money I fear we would lose teachers and then in turn hurt the quality of care children are receiving.

(54445) We have been here 15 years the only center in our community serving under 5. We could potentially close the doors if we try to maintain wages at this level as we simply can not afford this. It can parents afford much more than they are already paying

(54449) The Funds have allowed us to renovate and put our building back up to code. We have been able to provide monthly funding to our staff which will no longer be an incentive for them. We have been able to update equipment without having to worry about where we are going to be able to get the additional funding. We have been able to provide additional financial assistance to families.

(54481) We had 13 staff and 28/33 slots filled prior to covid. We now have 16 children and 3 staff. No one is answering our cries for staffing or paying the staff a decent wage.

(54636) This program has helped me give raises for staff and to keep staff! If we lose this program, we will lose staff thus having to close classrooms and eliminate childcare spots.

(54935) Due to the inability to hire staff, classrooms closed will not allow us to be sustainable

(53010) Very nervous if we will be able to keep the dedicated staff and high quality care once payments stop...

(53010) ITS SCARY TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN ONCE THIS GRANT STOPS COMING. WE ARE STILL SHORT-STAFFED WITH A LONG WAITING LIST. I HAVE GIVEN RAISES TO KEEP THE TEACHERS I HAVE BUT DONT KNOW IF I WILL BE ABLE TO AFFORD THEM ONCE \$ STOPS.

(53014) Child Care Counts has been a life saver. I myself was struggling as a owner to put food on my table. The added bonus money helps. If child care counts ends, I will be forced to shut out doors because I will have staff leave and can not make up the amount that has been given to them. I already have an entire classroom shut because of staffing and this money helps cover the bills for that room being closed.

(53014) We are still trying to recoup the cost of the Calumet County AARPA Funding ending that was paying for staff childcare discounts and sign on bonuses. We were planning to use Child Care Counts funding to continue those benefits at least for staff that joined during the grant year. We have also been using Child Care Counts to absorb the increased cost of food, supplies and rent. With ChildCare

Counts being cut in half suddenly, we need to make some serious decisions. Representatives Bodden and Tittl are visiting our center next month.

(53015) With continued staffing struggles, knowing that I was able to give bonuses has really helped me retain the extremely small staff I already have. If these are decreased or go away, I am unsure if I will be able to retain, but I certainly will not be able to attract new teacher to my center. Ultimately, I may need to close classrooms.

(53021) With the child care counts funding, we were able to raise our starting wage and give increases to the current staff we have to help to keep them. While we were able to hire on about two more staff, we are still in a severe staffing shortage. We considered not running our summer school age program due to staff, but at the last minute we were able to find someone who could do it. Our future plan was to increase our tuition rates in January, since we were planning on the funding possibly ending at that time. However, with this recent news, I am at a loss as to what this will mean for us. I cannot cut wages, or I know I will lose staff to the point we will not be able to stay open.

(53024) The money allocated to childcare for our state needs to be used for childcare for years the government has spent this money elsewhere and it's truly unaccounted for. Stop wasting money on ideas and give the money to the Centers to keep them open. You don't need 15 organizations doing the same thing either which is happening more and more I am seeing.

(53027) This has allowed us to keep tuition costs reasonable, but should the grants be taken away, the money has to come from parents.

(53029) We have waiting lists for all of our classrooms and are unable to hire teachers to teach. We only see this problem growing. We had eight classrooms and are now down to 6, with a possibility of only 5 this fall. Also, if we are unable to hire additional teachers for our upcoming summer program, we may have to close a classroom which will anger many families that will be scrambling to find other care which is almost impossible to find because all centers are in the same boat. I wish legislators would realize how this will impact our state's economy. Without childcare available businesses won't be able to fill vacant positions. Considering the size of our state's budget, I'm sure there are other areas earmarked for funding that they could cut or reduce funding for with no impact to the state as a whole.

(54970) Staff rely on the income from CCC funding to pay bills and buy gas to get to work.

(53032) This is so sad that the funding is not continuing. We are so in need of quality childcare centers so parents can work. We have a long waiting list of 50+ families that need care. We need to be able to pay the staff better as children and providing quality care to families is so important for communities.

(53035) 70% of children on my waiting list of 82 children are infants

(53038) As a non-profit center, our wages are the lowest in the industry. With these grants we have been able to increase wages without increasing rates more than 5%. Increasing wages is necessary to retain and hire new staff. If we can't retain and/or hire new staff we will have to partially or fully close effectively causing issues to families who need care to work. If we raise rates to raise wages, we put a financial burden on families causing them to choose between work and childcare.

(53039) As a group center, I will need to raise my rates 70 dollars per week per child to just make ends meet if ccc doesn't pass. I probably will lose more teachers and then have to close classrooms. but at this point it might be better for me to just close and find a better paying career.

(53042) We have been able to retain quality, educated staff with the Child Care Counts funding through hourly wage increases and regular bonuses.

(53045) The Child Care counts has allow us to provide a living wage to our teachers, therefore, hiring more qualified teachers.

(53051) Like everyone else, we have been using our Childcare Counts money to stay afloat. We have been very grateful to receive Part B as it has allowed us to increase our teacher's wages to compete with most retail businesses and restaurants in our area. We have also been using Part B to give our teachers a monthly bonus. Without the Childcare Counts monies, we would not be able to do this.

Our Accounts Manager did a little calculating and found out that 26% of our income comes from Childcare Counts. That is 1/4 of our income. It scares me to think about what things might be like after January 2024. We certainly can't increase our fees by 26% or we will be the most expensive childcare center in our area. (And we all know what will happen if we do that).

Not only am I concerned about our childcare center but I am concerned about the profession as a whole. If other centers have to downsize and/or close because they can't make it financially, what are parents going to do? Parents need to go to work in order to pay their bills. If they don't have childcare, they can't go to work, which means they can't pay their bills. That also means, that more businesses will have to downsize/close because their employees are staying home with their children.

In the end, decisions need to be made so the children don't suffer. They are so young and innocent and don't understand what is going on.

(53566) In addition to increasing tuition, staff benefits such as insurance, retirement and PTO would no longer be affordable.

(53051) We can NOT decrease teachers wages because you can not find childcare teachers unless you pay them more. Long term, we will probably eventually close our doors because our families will have to absorb the increase in payroll expense.

(53075) We are closed Fridays to carry on

(54950) Hiring had stalled until we increased wages by \$3/hour. This is all money from Program B funding.

(53081) Hiring qualified has been very difficult. We have to remain competitive. No one will work for low hourly wages. The state requires staff to have qualifications, which involves a cost. Currently our center is using our child care count funds to help cover payroll and payroll taxes. I fear without support from the state parents will not be able to afford increased tuition. Decreasing staff wages will cause staff to leave, which could potentially jeopardize our child care center.

(53083) Our story is pretty much identical to Brookes story she shared

(53083) We have been able to stay open and keep most of our classrooms open due to the childcare counts. We have given the teachers significant raises as well given parents the option to keep sick children home and pay only 1/2 tuition for those days. This has helped us to be able to keep other children and teachers healthy! Without the childcare counts I am very nervous as we have only been able to keep quality teachers by increasing pay and the tuition increase to cover that would be too high for parents to cover on their own. I feel like we have to follow state requirements just like state funded education programs and should receive some of the state funding in order to continue to provide quality care for the children.

(53088) The bonus for the teachers has been very nice. I have given the full amount to them from the funding workforce development.

(53094) We recently had a change in administration and virtually had to "start over" from the bottom up. The Child Care Counts has been a huge asset to retaining the new staff and benefits it took to grow the program from the bottom.

(53094) Our families could not sustain an increase in cost if we do not have CCC

(53095) The additional funding is helping pay off debts incurred during the pandemic. It has also allowed us to increase wages to keep our staff employed, while also allowing us to make improvements to our center.

(53105) We can not compete with the wages other businesses in our area are paying people without Child Care Counts money.

(53115) Child Care Counts funding has allowed us to retain the qualified staff we have and competitively compensate the new qualified staff we've needed to hire. Without this funding, I don't believe we'd be open, or at the very least, we'd have to close more rooms.

(53121) We have a very similar story to the one listed above and the funds we have received for the employees went directly into bonuses for them. Our funds that we would lose would be more like 30% of our income if you didn't count the amount given to staff for bonuses. I determined we would need to raise fees at least 30%, more like 32% which would be totally unaffordable to our parents.

(53132) The CCC program has helped to hire quality teachers and have kept cost down for parents regarding field trips, and extra costs that would have been passed on to them.

(53140) Simply put our government has created this crisis and now expects us to "Figure it out". The free market worked for as long as I can remember. Typically as soon as the government gets involved things always go south "unless" funding continues which in turn creates more inflation which basically adds a new tax to everyone on a monthly basis. Do our wages support inflation? NOPE! So the only answer is to raise rates (which most centers already have) and if the public cannot afford it look for many centers to close. To really solve this issue we must look at the core issues and fix the core. Otherwise more funding is just a band aid that will cause taxes to go up or inflation to run crazy. Neither are a good option for Wisconsin or our country!

(53140) I have been in childcare for 33 years. For the first time in 33 yrs, I am seeing teachers make a living wage due to CCC. Moms who can afford to put food on their families table. It is IMPORTANT not only to the care of the children in the program, but for the employees and their families. It is hard to feel like a professional or educator when you need welfare assistance to feed your own families.

(53142) We have struggled to both retain and attract qualified staff (from a licensing and quality of care standpoint, we certainly have higher barriers to entry than say fast food or Amazon, who pay more). While these funds have allowed us to raise all wages by a couple dollars per hour, most of our employees could still make more money at Kwik Trip. All the while, we are charging \$1,500 to \$3,500 per month for our families, which is challenging even for wealthier families but is certainly impossible to afford for lower-income families - thus creating a severe equity issue for high quality programs (we are 4 stars). We operate on razor thin margins even on the best of times - without keeping Child Care Counts we will take a hard look at whether or not to close our doors. From a business standpoint it may just no longer be feasible, no matter how much we want to continue to serve our community.

(53143) Since Covid our childcare center really hasn't picked up and even giving the staff bonuses I feel they are still under paid we would definitely be holding on by a string if we remove these funds

(53143) The Child Care Counts funding has definitely helped me to continue offering quality care and my staff have appreciated the extra bonuses.

(53143) We reopened after a six month closure due to Covid and have been struggling since to increase enrollment based on finding and paying staff a reasonable wage. Child Care Counts funding is also allowing me to not have to raise my rates but if the funding is decreased and/or ends, I will be forced to raise my rates substantially which in turn could cause our center to lose students who parents can not afford the tuition.

(53147) A quick run down on me and where I am coming from. I have been in Early Childhood Education for over 30 years, working as a teacher, director, and owner of both family and group centers. I am currently with a group center serving about 45 families, open year-round, serving children

ages ages 2-12. Childcare openings are generally hard to come by in our area and nearly impossible to find for the infant/toddler age group. Our school district now offers half day 3K and full day 4K and wrap around care. Thus, further pulling children out of traditional childcare centers at an earlier age.

Since Covid hit many full time 5-day families dropped to 4 days or less between parents working from home and the majority of the parents today can only afford part time childcare and a relative/friend is watching the child for free on alternate days. My childcare parents making the \$11-18 an hour average joe kind of jobs can't afford day care! They make too much money to receive state assistance with childcare. I have had too many parents who have decided to not work and receive state benefits because by the time they paid childcare their actual take home pay was so minimal. These were not lazy people looking to use/abuse the system. These are hardworking, single and two parent households living paycheck to paycheck, wanting to work and provide for their families themselves. So now we have more children in need of care but only at a part time basis which is difficult to staff and make full time equivalents from all the part time children.

Staffing is a nightmare. Let's face it, not everybody is cut out to work with children day in and day out, we require continuing education and continuous training in CPR/trauma and abuse and neglect, prep for lesson planning and activities etc. Even paying \$15 an hour for a qualified teacher, not much less than I make as a director, we still do not have the staff to operate at full capacity. It's hard to compete with fast food and retail places offering the same wage, with way less responsibility, but also with full benefit packages etc. that we cannot offer.

The Child Care Counts program has been a real lifeline for Child Care Centers. It has provided funding to be able to pay our staff competitive wages and to improve the overall general quality of care we provide. This vital funding supports not only providing quality care for our nation's most valuable resource, our children, but wage/benefit support for those providing the safe and loving environments we all want our children and grandchildren in. I have grave concerns about our future and the other centers in our area that I have spoken with. We will be crippled with payroll and truly unable to increase our tuition any higher to cover the significant amount of loss in financial aid we are currently receiving. Sadly, having to close a center that has been serving the community since the 1960's is a real possibility that has been discussed. Having to close even more childcare centers will cause a tragic ripple effect in our small-town community, where we just don't have as many childcare options in the first place as larger metropolitan areas.

It is my hope that the legislators move forward with the funding of Child Care Counts. The problem with the current childcare crisis has been brewing for a long time and all the complications of the Covid Epidemic finally seemed to bring some light on just how bad things are for both family and group childcare providers/centers. As a nation we need to recognize just how important those first 5 years of life are in the development of the future leaders of our country and support our youngest generation and those who serve them.

(53154) We used all fund to improve our center and program and we gave/give funds dedicated to staff as bonuses and explained this was a temporary funding and maintained wages as before the CCC funding.

(53158) The funds provided from the Child Care Counts program is essential in keeping our center open, maintaining the few teachers we had following COVID19, recruiting new staff, and paying a decent living wage. This money allows us to be competitive in the workforce to offer our teachers what they deserve.

This funding also allows us continue to provide a clean, safe facility as well as an excellent education for our students.

This is essential because without a safe, clean place to send our children, the world stops. People cannot work without knowing their children are well-cared for and safe.

(53168) Our healthy home cooked lunch is one of our core values and of great import to many families struggling to feed their families it is a sad day to have to consider disbanding this aspect of our center. Between the groceries and the wage that the cook makes- it seems the sensible course as well as raising parents rates to an alarming amount.

(53178) This money has allowed me to retain and recruit qualified teachers to my center. In an already extremely low pool of people to recruit this has helped me to be able to offer competitive wages to recruit and retain teachers

(53218) Our teachers and teaching assistants work very hard for very little unfortunately, we were hiring teaching assistants at a rate of 11.40 to 12.00 an hour (depending upon experience) but with the CCC money we added an additional \$5 an hour to that making it 16.40 to 17. Our teachers are typically hired at 16.50 to 23.00 an hour based upon training and experience but with the CCC money we again added \$5 an hour making it 21.50 to 28.00. I want to be able to pay my teachers a livable wage so they can afford to pay their bills/rent/food/expenses to survive day to day. We have been able to add a stipend of \$5 an hour for every hour worked onto the pay of each employee since the CCC money was awarded and staff have been very appreciative. Especially after COVID when times were challenging. Our staff have been budgeting on this money for the past year and a half, we are afraid we will loose even more staff if/when funding gets cut and that may make it so we can not serve the children and families we are funded to serve. As a Head Start program, we have high standards to meet and it is VERY challenging to find quality staff when we do not have the money to compensate for their skills they have to share with our agency.

(53178) THIS funding has helped me stay open and keep my tuition costs reasonable for families. And it has also helped me to retain employees by offering a fair wage

(53181) The decrease in funds will affect our ability to retain our qualified staff.

(53186) 100% of program B has gone to teachers via a bonus. However, I'm still losing teachers because we do not offer health insurance. In order to offer insurance, we need to have confirmation of funding for a large time period.

(53190) We are already paying our students staff and lead teacher staff a very low wage. This money has helped give teachers a livable wage. This funding has also been given to families to help them pay for tuition costs that have risen. With the cost of everything rising, this money has been extremely beneficial for our program

(53204) The 4 and 5 "bonus dollars" being directly connected to ONLY staff wages and PD makes maintaining classroom requirements challenging. I believe there needs to be additional dollars connected to Program A as well as Program B. Staff wages is extremely important and should have requirements of these dollars being spent that way however maintaining classrooms/playgrounds is also important and expensive.

(53010) I have 5 before and after school centers in Washington County. It is a struggle to find qualified staff willing to work a split shift even in - "pre -pandemic", or "good times". Because of the Child Care Counts funding, I am able to offer a decent wage for my employees. In addition, I have been able to give substantial bonuses 3 times per year. If I increase my childcare fees, working parents will remove their children from my program, which will lead to more "latch key" children. My centers are located in the schools and the children are safe in my programs. Many of the children need the positive guidance and homework assistance my program provides. Recently, there have been 2 other school age childcare programs in our small community that have decided to close due to staffing issues, leaving me as the only provider. I have been in business for over 25 years, and I do not "need" to work. I work because I feel the need to provide quality childcare services for my community and to offer a great place for employees to work. If the funding ends, I will probably need to close my business. I am very concerned what the families in our area will for child care but there is no way I will be able to charge enough to pay my staff enough to continue working for me.

(53206) The CCC have helped my center a great deal and helped with staff wages

(53208) We are a unique urban Milwaukee Group center that has been able to grow from 2 classrooms to 6 classrooms over the past 3 years. We have over 200+ on our waitlist leaving a 1 seat available for every 5 children in need of quality care. We would not have the teachers we have today, or the quality of care we provide, if we were not receiving the CCC funding. Our doors would be closed...and will close if this funding does not continue. 30 teachers will be out of work and most likely will go into another industry and over 80 families will be without care and may have to leave their jobs to take care of their children.

My landlord raised my rent due to energy increases, then they gave me a new lease with a 52% rent increase, my insurance has gone up and the overhead costs of food, supplies and consumables has blown our entire budget. We raised tuition and lost middle class families because of it. Only WI SHares families and the Upper White Collar class can afford our care. Our teachers are still without insurance and when they turn 26 and leave their ECE teaching positions due to not having their parents coverage any longer. We give raises and my teachers lose access to their food stamps. We cover our employees cost for their own children's care and in turn lose out on an income generating spot in our classroom. This industry is in crisis! WE NEED THE GOVERNMENT TO STEP UP!

1. We need funding similar to K-12 for insurance and fair livable wages for our teachers
2. We need programing back in high schools to introduce ECE career pathes that pay livable wages and offer benefits.
3. We need the true cost of care supported by businesses, the state and the families but in an affordable way so it is equitable for all.
4. We need big employers to house childcare centers and offset the overhead costs so the businesses can survive.
5. We need big businesses to offer employment incentives for teaching, possibly scholarships or discounts or insurance coverage.
6. We need people to see the value in the service we provide and the patient teachers that provide this service everyday so we have a workforce out there working!

WE ARE IN A CRISIS HERE, WE NEED HELP or we WILL ALL CLOSE our doors.

(53209) The challenges of paying Early Educators above poverty wages without child care counts will be another pandemic in my opinion. I would either have to raise my rates which families wouldn't be able to afford, or cut hours to adjust where tuition won't cover payroll. Either way the coin flips we are in trouble without additional funding.

With the rising costs of everything literally it is imperative for Early Care to be included in the states budget. Without additional supports many of our doors will close and parents won't be able to work.

(53209) Childcare counts has saved our program on various occasions. Our center flooded recently, we had no hot water, heat or electricity. All our spare clothes, extra toys and back-stock equipment was destroyed. Our insurance denied the claim, leaving the center with a very expensive unexpected ticket. Credit cards and CCC has kept us afloat; the lack of funds will have a drastic impact on our program seeing that our plan was to use future payments to pay off credit card debt accumulated.

(53210) We are an accredited program serving mostly families who receive wi shares. In order to raise quality we have had to significantly raise wages. We were able to do so because of the 25% increase we were getting prior to Covid. Those funds were replaced with ccc funds. We will not be able to sustain if ccc funding goes away.

(53212) My program have served many nationalities and ethnic groups. We were struggling financially before the Child Care Counts Program was instituted. These funds allowed me to increase staff wages as well as give incentive bonuses to maintain staffing. It also enabled us to buy necessary equipment such as coats, hands gloves and boots for under privileged children to ensure that they get outdoor play time during the cold season. Without these funds I would have to cut staff and wages which will lead to the center closing due to lack of employees.

(53212) We were very excited to be able to participate in the Child Care Counts Funding! Now that the funding may be cut by 50%, we will have to make adjustments in our current budget that will affect both staff and families with very little notice for them to make adjustments in their own personal budgets to make adjustments for unplanned changes.

(53213) The funds have allowed us to give bonuses to our hard-working staff. Every three months we issue bonus checks to the staff. The funds have also allowed us to cover our lease payment and utility bills, freeing funds for other required expenses.

(53214) This monies have helped to support increase wages for our current teachers as well as helping us to bring new people into our centers. Without the monies, I am afraid this increase would go away making it harder to retain qualified teachers and bring new ones on board. This in turn will create burn-out in our current teaching staff as well as more of a childcare teaching desert. Without early care, families will lose their ability to work because quality programs have had to cut services and/or close. This will put a larger strain on our current economy causing serious ripple effects in every industry.

(53214) Even as a larger agency with three sites, it will be very difficult to keep our doors open if CCC funding goes away. We already have seen the loss of YS funding. I don't even know if JUST doing a tuition increase will be enough. Quality child care will cease to exist in my opnion.

(53215) CCC funding has increased staff morale and allowed us to complete major projects

(53216) The system is so backwards. You have parents who get a \$1 raise and lose their childcare and have to quit their jobs. Then you have parents who literally milk the system and get free childcare. We definitely have benefited so much off of CCC. It's sad that people who just sit at home and do nothing get so much.

(53216) The extra funding has allowed me to give sign on bonuses and pay higher wages compared to other childcare facilities. This is why and how I am able to retail staff and provide exceptional care to the inner city of Milwaukee.

(53597) Hiring had stalled until we were able to add \$3/hour to every paycheck from this funding. Staff hiring is improving and our long-term staff are FINALLY being rewarded for following their hearts and working in a field about which they are passionate. Without staff, we cannot take care of over 500 children per day at all four locations.

(53216) We depend on child care counts. The childcare industry doesn't make enough money for the crucial role we play in the lives of our children.

(53216) I don't see this issue being resolved by raising my rates because the parent may not be able to afford the increased rate. I am hoping that since the summer is a couple months away, school will be out and the after schoolers will be here all day so the WI Shares payments will be more. I have already had to go back to working in a classroom, so all I will need in one more sub-teacher for the summer. With my head count being less now, this will help with one expense - payroll. I can save a little more or for the summer at least.

(53217) Due to the Child Care Counts funding, we have been able to increase our teachers' wages to a staring pay of \$15/hour. We now need to maintain that rate of pay, so without Child Care Counts funding, we would have to drastically increase tuition or decrease our enrollment (close classrooms) and staffing needs. Furthermore, our center is unique because we have inclusive classrooms serving children with and without special needs. Centers like ours are hard to come by, so if we lost the funding, we would be disappointing many families and leave many children at a disservice.

(53218) We don't know what to do really the childcare counts helps us to meet payroll.

(53219) Childcare counts has enabled us to give raises and bonuses to our staff

(53219) We may also have to think about closing our 2nd shift and Saturday

(53221) DCF is putting us in a very difficult position right now like I said I have already raised the wages hired more staff assured parents there will be no increase in the Tution this year now what am I suppose to do

(53221) Our expenses are much higher

(53221) I have been able to give raise to all of my staff and also bonuses because of the CCC since now that it is being reduced to 50% I don't know how we are going to survive

(53221) The childcare counts funds is what keeping us in business

(53222) We have increased teacher's salary which they are deserving of, but it will be hard to maintain bigger salaries for our staff without the extra help.

(53222) Currently in need of staff to continue to grow back to orig. cap. pre-pandemic. To train, and educate quality staff is a big ticket cost.

(53051) these funds help us to pay our staff a livable wage and still provide excellent service to our families in the community. we would not be able to keep the center open without this funding

(53223) I will need to let go of half my staff if the ccc decreases and ends

(53233) Child care counts money is a band aid for an on going situation and while it is very much appreciated, it can not solve the problem.

(53402) We struggle to keep up with giving staff a increase yearly. The extra money has allow us to do that. Yes we are paying more taxes. Inflation is higher on everything to keep the center open. It is so hard to find qualified staff so you have to try an keep the staff that you have.

(53403) We are a non-profit organization that serves about 40% special needs and about 70% of our families fall below the poverty guidelines from our area community. The funding has been valuable to increase teacher's wages and to retain staff so that there is consistency for the families that we serve. Even with the funding available, teachers are not paid a fair or livable wage and many of the staff continue to receive additional assistance from the state in the way of food share and child share benefits. As a director, I constantly question how we can better take care of our staff so that they can continue to take care of the families that we serve. It seems like such an irony that we expect early childcare teachers to meet the demands associated with serving young children and their families, such as understanding development of birth to five years, maintaining safe and age appropriate classrooms, and supporting families, etc when in fact, we are not meeting the basic needs of a healthy financial lifestyle for our own teachers to succeed personally. The funding has been valuable in retaining staff, hiring new staff, and inspiring staff to learn and grow within the field. Without this funding, we would have to decrease our staff wages by 17%. I fear that this would lead to a mass exodus of not just our agency but multiple agencies throughout the state and would put families in crisis situations where they would not be able to work due to lack of childcare OR families would go into survival mode and care would be forfeited to less ideal situations. This would have such a huge impact for the future of not only our children, but the state economy as well. As we currently stand, we have a waiting list of over 80 plus children, many of them special needs, and this would only increase as staff would certainly leave the field for higher paying, simpler jobs.

(53405) Without the Child Care Counts money, we would have to lower salaries and staff would leave so we would have to close. 80 percent of our families live at or below poverty so they would not be able to pay for child care.

(53405) Even though it is not financially responsible, staff have come to rely on the bonuses and if they are stopped, the staff will go to other industries and we will close for lack of staff. We already have taken a loss with the Child Care Counts money as opposed to the YoungStar bonus, so if we loose that

as well, we will not be able to maintain our 5 star rating. We provide care for low income families who will not have many other options for child care in their neighborhood.

(53405) We are a non-profit, parent cooperative preschool that depends on the parents to keep our program running. Due to Covid, we had to decrease our fundraisers and eliminate our volunteer opportunities that helped keep our costs down. Our enrollment decreased drastically when we were able to return to full days. Because of the CCC funding we were able to keep our staff employed and continue to run our program without the volunteers and decreased enrollment. We used this funding to provide bonuses since we would be unable to maintain the hourly rate after the CCC payments were over. We have been fortunate to keep the same staff here for 6 years but since we had no guarantee that the money would continue after January they have decided to find a financially stable employment. We don't feel it aligns with our mission and vision to raise tuition on our families to keep the school operating as a high quality program therefore we will be ending our 65 year program at the end of June. This is a loss for the community and for all of the parents that are looking for affordable early childhood education programs.

(53508) We could not keep the center open without the additional funding. Wages and costs are too high vs the tuition we could charge area parents.

(53520) Increased tuition already before we got child care counts because we were way low compared to other daycares and would have to increase again if child care counts ends

(53520) New daycare and raised rates after realizing we weren't making ends meet and now might have to raise again cus of loss of funds

(54983) Funding has been used to supplement classroom consumable materials (paint, crayons, paper, glue, etc) With out the CCC funding and the rising cost of materials, we will have to significantly decrease the amount materials available for children to use

(53527) The possible loss of 4K students AND loss of counts will result in closure.

(53532) These monies have helped us to retain our high quality staff and afford to advance their quality. Without these monies we would be closed or raised our rates so high we would force some families to leave the workplace.

(53532) Child Care Counts funding has allowed me to increase salaries and benefits for my staff to a more competitive salary / benefit package. Without the continued support, I would be forced to cut these benefits resulting in loss of employees or raise tuition 24.8%.

(54942) Program B funds are crucial to staffing our center. \$17/hour for a new hire helps us compete with Target/Walmart where they can be on their phones all day.

(53545) The founding helps keep my and others doors open for families that's in need of the support and also the children benefit from the program mostly.

(53551) CCC has been life changing for our community. We have been able to raise wages considerably and complete projects that increase the quality of learning for our children that as a stand alone preschool we normally wouldn't have the budget to do so. We strongly desire for all children birth to 5 to have the opportunity to be in preschools that are not institutionalized and the programming is a natural and true experience for organized free play and choice with a lot of natural outdoor experiences. The current Wisconsin system for 3 - 5 year olds is very institutional and since it was implemented our negative behaviors, ADHD, ADD, emotional stresses, anxiety etc have skyrocketed for our young children. We need to help our young children and give children the opportunity to be in facilities that nurture their physical and emotional growth positively without using facility models that are meant for growth of six year olds and older. Children need the opportunities to have free choice of play and not made to sit at a table to do a worksheet or ask to do this activity right now. When we instruct children ages 3 -5 to do this, we crush their creativity, we damage that free spirit and we disrupt their emotional growth. We need to do better and provide these children with preschools that allow children to grow physically and emotionally without outside influencers that specialize in children 6 years to 17 years. The CCC has allowed us to implement many more positive tools for our preschool that benefit this type of environment for children to be successful physically and emotionally. CCC is an opportunity for our preschool system to be strong and effective throughout Wisconsin. The models used in Norway and Sweden are based on how children's brain develop cognitively and emotionally. That is why they do not start primary school until six or seven. The CCC could be the beginning of a new model that allows children birth to 5 to have learning opportunities in appropriate settings for 0 to 5 age groups which will promote healthy students to begin kindergarten in a primary school setting once they turn six. At six years old children are able to learn and be successful in an institutionalized setting. We really need to step back and learn how children brains develop and what is the optimal setting look like for our future society. CCC could be the pathway for this change.

(53558) We have already registered and sent our rates for summer 2023 and the school year 2023-24. This will effect what rates we sent out. When we register next February our rates for the following year are going to have a high increase. We are already short staffed and I am concerned we may have to cancel some of our programs if I can not hire staff.

(53566) The child care counts grant has helped us to slow down the staff turnover rate by allowing us to provide our staff with monthly bonuses based off of their hours worked during the monthly counts weeks. Although it doesn't seem like much at times, it truly is! The cost of everything has increased at a significant rate and our employees need to be able to afford to put food on their table, gas in their vehicles and they should be allowed to live a somewhat comfortable life style. If the child care counts grant goes away, we will most likely have to look into raising the cost of our programs so that way we are able to continue to pay our employees a sustainable wage. It's a trilemma effect, we want quality childcare programs but we also want to pay our employees a livable wage and keep the cost of child care programs down. The child care counts grant has helped us to be able to do just that which is why we hope that this continues into future years.

(53566) Still struggling to pay our teachers a decent wage. Right in the door no experience \$9.50 an hour and only a dollar or two more with experience and education. We do this to keep the tuition rates low so, that we have affordable care for our families. Our teachers enjoy the monthly bonus and I think it helps keep our staff. This grant helps us pay for updated items we couldn't afford in the past and help maintain our building. We honestly don't feel like we will make it without this grant.

(53566) The Child Care Counts Program A monies goes entirely towards payroll and payroll taxes. These monies have helped us be able to keep our doors open.

(53566) Child care counts have been vital to improving and keeping the quality of our program.

(53572) This funding has helped me retain and at track staff. As well as participating in DWD programs such as Apprenticeships and TEACH REWARD scholarships.

(53572) These funds have continued allowed us to increase wages for our teachers (who are still underpaid in relation to the work/skill needed to provide high quality care) and keep our tuition rates attainable for our families. If these funds go away, we will need to increase our tuition rates. This may cause issues for families who cannot afford the increase in tuition and leave our high-quality program.

(53574) We are already struggling to survive with the child care counts funds. So without it, it does not make sense for us to be open even though we have a waitlist in all ages. But our families cannot afford to pay a tuition hike of 22% and we are tired of the continuous struggle in this field. It is disheartening trying to do what is best for children and not having the adequate support from our government to do so. We are failing our youngest in the state, our families, and our economy.

(53583) The bonus money is helping me keep my quality teachers that have been with me for many years. If we loose the money they may look at other careers.

(53589) Although we have a lot of children and people think that we are making a lot of money based on our tuition rates and number of children we come out even every month with the funds given for the Child Care Counts. That leaves no room for improvements or giving teachers raises. I can't keep raising rates for the parents because it is fair to them either. Cost of food, materials, gas, vehicles, etc. is going up and the 4% increased for families doesn't even begin to cover it. Childcare employees are some of the lowest paying jobs and my teachers work very hard every day to give the care that the children and parents deserve.

(53589) As a non-profit Parent Co-op, we try to keep tuition down. Competing with other programs for staff is difficult. The grants allowed us to keep our rates down and increase salaries. We will have to increase rates or not give raises if the funding does not continue at it's former levels

(53589) When hiring I let potential staff know that the CCC's funds add in an additional monthly bonus paid out on 1 paycheck during the month. This amount, because we are accredited, is (over the course of a year) like an additional \$3+ an hour. This has single handedly changed the minds of some potential staff members. I have been able to hire staff at a wage that is maintainable per our weekly rates because of these extra funds.

The amount of rules and regulations the state puts on staff for childcare does not equal the amounts we are able to offer staff to work. We no longer get qualified staff members applying, unless they are looking for a ridiculous starting wage. (When I say ridiculous, I mean that our center is unable to pay staff that amount, not that they do not deserve that amount. Childcare is a highly underpaid career and is still looked down on by many, although parents and the state require so much out of us). If we hire staff with no qualifications and cannot get them qualified in time that they are needed to be alone in a classroom then we are cited and possibly fined for this. There is no win here and it is highly frustrating. Thankfully the courses needed to become Lead qualified are still being offered free, which I feel they should ALWAYS be. Charging people, making very little hourly, \$140+ for each course is simply crazy. For a starting wage of \$15 an hour both courses would roughly be 60% of a week's paycheck, likely more once taxes are taken out. People cannot afford that.

I believe these grants should be a forever staple in the childcare field. We need more people getting back into early education, education as a whole is really struggling for qualified staff members.

(53593) Child care accounts funding has allowed us to retain and recruit quality teachers while keeping the cost of childcare affordable for families in our area. If the funding program ends, we will no longer be able to provide quality care at affordable rates. Passing the increased cost along to the parents is not a good option as that well make it an affordable for many families resulting in one of the parents staying home to care for the children. This will further worsened are already dire staffing shortage in so many industries. It's a vicious cycle that needs to be controlled with government, intervention and funding.

(53593) The additional funding allows us to pay higher wages to our staff. Without it, we would not be able to maintain the wages we are currently offering. We would have to increase tuition which is already very high.

(53597) We have been in business for 32 years and have an extensive waiting list. This loss of help from the state would severely impact my ability to keep quality staff and serve my current families let alone any families on my waiting list. Many, many families are already unable to find care and with the probability of others closing without this help our situation would be dire then it already is.
Thank you

(53703) Cutting funding with a 3 week notice is unacceptable by DCF. They knew this was happening and didn't tell providers intentionally. They are showing to be part of the problem not the solution. Even if money is controlled by the Feds, they could of given us the information up front to better plan.

(53704) CCC funding has been a lifesaver for our program. Without this, we would have most likely needed to close our doors. Even with this much appreciated funding source, we still needed to raise our tuition by \$10/week for all age groups. If this funding ends, it would be extremely hard to have to raise our tuition to equal the amount of revenue we would no longer have coming in each month. Most of our parents couldn't afford that kind of price hike.

Also, we would need to decrease our staff wages by \$1.50/hour (the extra amount that they are currently receiving from the CCC fund). This would be devastating to them, as most are living pay check to pay check now. I can see some of them leaving our program to work anywhere else that they can receive higher wages. The workforce is already unstable. Our program could not withstand this getting even worse.

I implore you to make childcare a priority, and continue funding CCC. All children deserve to have high quality care available to them! All teachers deserve to be able to make livable wages doing this very important work!

(53704) This pays our rent, that takes a great deal of pressure from our budget.

(53704) We currently have used this money to give staff wages a bump, we have 17 families who receive a scholarship with these funds, who would be able to attend otherwise. we have left our center affordable for families with these funds.

(53705) The child care funds program has allowed us to retain and hire teachers at a better rate. A rate they deserve. We are slowly closing a wide gap of unequal pay for Early Childhood teachers. If we don't continue to pay our teachers better we will have programs that will not be able to provide services. If funding stops then these costs will be placed on families and families will not be able to maintain the cost of childcare causing a snowball effect on our economy. The percentage of families that don't qualify for support but can barely afford the cost of childcare is huge.

(53711) Counts has held over 3 months of my grants due to an allegation that did not require me to close my center. That caused us to fall behind on so many things. If this program is reduced or taken away, we may not be able to sustain operation.

(53713) Our center has been in business for over 40 years. Of the 5 full time staff employed, 4 have worked at this program for over 20 years, and our Board is doing everything to retain them. The Staff retention portion went directly as an additional bonus, but even with that amount the wages are just adequate. This has been evidenced when I have tried to hire an additional teacher. The labor pool is abysmal, and I have had to up the entry wage just to get any applicants. Our small program will suffer in quality, and likely reduce the numbers of children served, as I would hire additional staff if I could find quality teachers.

(53714) We lost a lot of continuity in our enrollment due to the pandemic and are slowly but surely rebuilding. Without Child Care Counts we could not have our wages keep pace with inflation. Initially we would likely decrease wages but at some point we would have to pass the cost on to families by raising rates. That is a risky proposition because it could lower our enrollment further and cause us to

close our doors. Last summer we were looking at this school year as the one where we would go until we ran out of money and then have to close. Child Care Counts changed that narrative to one where we are looking forward to the possibility of being around for years to come. Hopefully the program will be here to stay for the long run.

(53719) The child care counts income has made it possible to increase starting wages from \$13-\$14 per hour for basic entry level staff to \$16-\$17 per hour. And experienced staff with credentials and teaching degrees increased from \$17-\$18 per hour to \$20-\$21 per hour. This is significant when you are talking about attracting and retaining staff!

(53719) CCC has allowed me to retain highly qualified staff and hire new staff at higher pay rates (\$16 - \$19 hourly).

(53719) I am very concerned about the future of childcare, and anticipate thousands of children will be in need of care this summer & fall as centers close their doors.

(53807) We will be open as long as I can make it work. These people need daycare. It will be very hard and alot of items we want I will no longer be able to buy. The staff deserve so much more. they work hard and I can't even reward them with a raise or an extra day off. Ive been very good to my staff and will no longer be able to do anything for them. Its not fair. Its not fair to the parents that need their jobs and won't be able to afford childcare if we have to keep raising our prices. Some are barely making it now. Its a sad situation all around. Ive take pride in having my daycare open 12 1/2 years. But wont make it 2 more at this rate.

(53807) Snug as a Bug Child Care Center, we are committed to building strong partnerships with families and the community. We provide Early Head Start services to the Cuba City and surrounding communities, we provide continuous communication and feedback to families on their child's development and offer parent engagement and involvement opportunities.

(53821) Been in business for 11 years. Only since subsidies have we be able to update centers to increase service capabilities for volume increase to allow for break even revenues and increase wages to retain staff. As owners we are still not taking wages that would afford us a little extra for vacations, insurance benefits, or some of the things you would consider measure of successful business persons

(53901) I am in the red now, I have families call me every day in need. My bright 5 Star - quality center is turning into a closed center. No money and no staff! As the administrator, I open, I cook, and I do breaks, I come in on weekends to do paperwork. My teachers work 9-10 hours and clean the center. We are all tired and worn out! They work for pennies. Why will no one understand? Children and families are going to suffer. Once you lose this work force it will not return! Funding and support is needed!

(53916) CCC had given me the ability to keep costs reasonable for parents, increase wages for staff and not have to wonder how will we make ends meet. This winter our boiler died on the coldest Monday !! We were able without hesitation to call and replace it. We had never been able to have a "rainy day" fund. We could pay for professional development opportunities. We have been able to focus on what counts: our quality care.

(53948) Teachers can make more money per hour anywhere else. It is surprising that we still have staff; but, they love what we do! The bonus money helps to compensate for the lower wages. If the bonus money goes away; I am afraid so will the staff as the bonus has helped them feel more like they make a wage they can live with. We also have been increasing rates to compensate for wage increases; but are on the top end of the norm for our area. There is not many more options for increasing rates.

(53949) I am having a hard time staying afloat. Due to wages I am having a hard time finding help. I don't want unreliable help. This bonus money I can hand out really helps keep the staff I have. I am licensed for 40 children but due to staff shortage I can only have about 21 children a day! I have a long

waiting list of people needing care that we can't provide due to staff shortage. My teachers are getting burnt out and may need to look for other employment options.

(53950) Our center was on the verge of losing staff members due to our inability to increase wages. Since receiving the grant money we were able to give each staff member a bonus each month and that helped us retain our staff members. Then businesses in our area increased their wages and to help retain and hire new staff we needed to increase our wages which the grant money helped but we were still running on a very tight budget. Our church decided to help us out with a short term agreement to help us hire new staff so we could increase our number of children we care for at the center. We rely on these grants to retain our staff, to purchase new items for the center to help increase our quality of care, and to help pay our monthly bills. We have no idea what we will do when this grant money is no longer available. Our parents were not happy with the last increase in tuition that started in September of last year and to increase the tuition again would put a financial stain on most of our parents. We have one family right now that is finding different members of their family to watch their children because they cannot afford to have their children in daycare. We have one of the highest rates in our area and to increase our rates would not find us in a very good situation. We beg the state representatives to help us. Parents have to work, but they also want good quality of care. Parents struggle to live paycheck to paycheck. Our center relies on these working parents to keep our front doors open and our staff employed.

(53952) Covid Counts has helped bring on new staff, while also helped to try and retain the staff that have been with us. The funds are used to help buy learning materials/ supplies for the classrooms, pay payroll, and allow incentive programs for staff retention. It also helped when we were mandated to close for Covid exposures, had we not had this program we would have had to close. Thankfully we are not having as many exposures and closures now, but the funds continue to allow us to provide additional sanitation to our building regularly to keep illnesses down. Even with the seasonal illnesses we see in Childcare that drastically can drop attendance such as RSV, Hand Foot and Mouth, the flu, etc. The extra sanitizing by a professional company has made a big difference but can be costly. If the funds end in 2024, I am unsure we can keep some of the incentive programs for staff, or the extra sanitizing efforts to be 2 of the more costly things we use the funds to help cover, other than just Payroll alone. Childcare is the reason parents can both be in the workforce, where we live Childcare is already hard to find, and if I had to downsize staffing or close that would be a huge loss to the community and surrounding communities we serve.

(53952) Being a new facility there are a lot of start-up costs that come with providing Group Childcare. These funds will help recruit staff to be able to fill our capacity for the building, by allowing sign-on bonuses, help pay for courses that are required by State Licensing, and provide a quality program to our community.

(53955) CCC funding makes up just over 20% of our revenue. We just recently heard our school district may be pulling 4K from the partnering child care centers. 4K makes up about 10% of our revenue. A 30% loss in revenue would be detrimental to our program/business; one I am uncertain that we would be able to overcome.

I started as a licensed in-home center in 2002. From there I expanded as a group center in 2004 because our community was in need of more support for our youth and their families. I strive to provide high quality care for our community. We are currently pursuing our fourth star in the YoungStar rating system.

Our center is in a child care desert due to the centers that have closed. All of the centers in our community have a waiting list. If we lose child care counts funding and have to close, 73 children will be affected. Losing funding like this will cause for more illegal child care centers to open, which put our children at risk.

I survived the crash of the economy which happened right after we purchased our current building 14 years ago. I worked three positions to keep things running. Our center cannot survive another hit like this.

(53955) I've been in business for almost 19 years as a group center. We have a wait list & looking to expand to meet the needs of our community as centers have and are closing. We prioritize quality &

promote higher education in our staff. We are just shy of meeting 4 star standards & will hopefully meet this within the year. It is rumored that the school district will be moving 4K to the school building and therefore the three centers that contract with the district would lose this income next school year. If we lose 4K and Child Care Counts I do not know how I will be able to stay open. We are licensed for 80 children in Columbia County. This would be detrimental to our community.

(53959) We have raised our teacher wages by as much as \$5-6 per hour due to this funding because this was what was needed to hire and retain staff. This funding allowed us to do this without raising wages. Now we are finding out this funding is being cut in half and this is not enough notice to raise our rates since parents are already signing summer contracts.

(53959) Child Care Counts has allow our center to not just stay open but to improve our center. We have been able to operate without raising rates since 2020. We have also been able to raise our staff wages above \$15 per hours. This has kept our core staff in place since the start of 2020. We have been able to offer monthly staff bonuses and able to hire additional part time staff to help with teacher burn out. To keep these currently wages we are going to need to increase our tuition by at minimal 28% or about \$50 per child.

We have also been able to make numerous improvements to our center which include but not limited to all new playground equipment, replacing all our furniture that was falling apart, adding storage to our classrooms that allowed us to open up our classroom to accept more children, we rewired an entire classroom to update the wiring, we replaced all the electrical outlets to make them child safe, and much more. We have hired many local businesses to help us with projects and most of the money that we are getting is staying right in our community when we do big projects.

We have not had to struggle to purchase basic supplies that are needed. We can operate and focus on the children and what is best for them and not have to put off what is best because we just don't have the funds.

If child care counts is not funded in the future I do not know how we will stay afloat without passing the burden onto families or reducing hours or services. We have 2 rooms that we would love to open up to provide care for more children but to do that we need to increase wages across the board to recruit staff and with the uncertainty of child care counts funding continuing we are putting this on hold. Tough decision are going to have to be made if child care counts funding is not approved. Wisconsin is currently in a child care crisis and if funding is not approved it will be a dire situation.

(53962) At this time the CCC is helping to pay the wages and payroll taxes. The tuition that we are getting is paying the expenses of the programming and utilities and rent.

(53963) We are in a location where child care is desperately needed. We have explored more locations, but we can hardly find enough staff to run our current center, let alone more sites. We also wanted to put on an addition to our center, but if we already have to increase tuition due to no funding, then we can't increase it more to cover the cost of an addition. So here we sit with a waiting list with about 60 children, and no way to help the situation. And no one in their right mind would start a child care center right now!

(54001) We are already in a childcare desert in this area and many middle income families may no longer be able to afford care if we have to continue to raise tuition rates.

(54002) Well to begin, childcare has always been a hard field for business owners and even teachers. We don't get the pay we deserve for the amount and importanceness of care we provide to our future aka the children in our care. As a business owner, I don't pay myself, so I can have enough money to pay my teachers the amount they deserve. Us childcare workers deserve a lot more. Us childcare business owners deserve to not have to struggle to make ends meet for our business and home life. We need childcare centers and inhomes. This world, this state, this county, NEEDS more options for care. There is so many families out there and will continue to rise in who needs care. Unless we have some sort of state or federal funding, childcare will never be a success in our world. So then what does that say. Our future will be crap because the good teachers and business owners a who put all their heart and dedication to the children in their care, won't be there anymore because they are and have been getting taken advantage of and can only hold on for so long. We do so much for the children and

families we work for. The kids need us, the families need us, the teachers need a job. They all need to be happy. The funding we do get now is a life saver, yes we need and want more funding, but the funding we do get now, makes us able to keep our doors open, pay our teachers close to what they deserve, and not have super high rates for our families. It helps us keep our teachers in this profession and not to look elsewhere when their heart is in childcare. We do this work out of our heart and passion for kids, not for the money. But at some point that will change. We need to pay the teachers what they want, what they need, what they deserve, or we won't have them anymore. We need the funding so we are able to keep up with bills, repairs, educational items for the center and children. Childcare is a very rewarding profession but when WE ARE NOT SUPPORTED, we fail, we stress out, and we aren't happy where we are. This needs to change and change for the good.

(54016) The Childcare counts funding has helped us remain open. It has helped me hire quality teachers and pay them more than they can receive at the gas station down the road. We will not be able to continue the high wages without this funding. The funding has also help offset the cost of rent/lease and the supplies increase. Without the funding we will raise our cost at least \$50 weekly for families. We will loose families. Without funding when my lease is up, I will close both my childcare centers/ one focusing on infant/toddler care. We cannot make it without the funding. It will be unaffordable to parents and parents will not be able to go back to work..NO CHILDCARE NO ECONOMY! Without the warning, now all of a sudden we will need to increase our rates in June (I've already signed parents/teachers for the summer). Parents will be mad, and this will also decrease our clients. They will not be able to afford to go to work! AGAIN NO CHILDCARE NO ECONOMY! With all the stress we as low income providers have had over the past 3 years, THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE HOW WE ARE TREATED! WE KEPT THE ECONOMY GOING AND RISKED OUR LIVES TO CARE FOR CHILDREN SO ESSENTIAL WORKERS COULD GO TO WORK! THIS ISN'T A HUGE AMOUNT OF FUNDING TO YOU....IT IS HUGE TO US! WITHOUT IT, WE WILL ALL CLOSE AND WISCONSIN WILL BE IN MORE OF A PROBLEM!

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(54016) The Child Care Counts program has helped us in may ways

1. I am able to hire more educated teachers, pay them a living wage 15-20 per hour plus 300 bonus monthly. Educated teachers = more quality care
2. Teachers are happy to come to work with higher wages, happy teachers = happy students
3. I am able to maintain payroll costs including taxes monthly with the help
4. I am able to hire cleaning and purchase supplies to clean on a regular basis (I was not able to do this prior).
5. Hiring bonus helps retain the quality staff.
6. Rent is paid on time for our building
7. I am able to hire a bookkeeper to help with paperwork and payroll
8. Grocery costs have tripled in the past year, this also helps with this inflation.
9. I am not burnt out as the single owner of this childcare center, as I was about to close in 2020.

(54020) Hard time finding staff I can't pay them what they deserve, provide benefits to retain for which is not allowing me to serve more children. Leaving families in tough situations and staff getting burnt out!!

(54021) Without Child Care Counts funding we will need to increase our tuition 37% for families in order to maintain our current pay rate for teachers and keep our center open. We have informed families that if Child Care Counts ends in 2024 that they should expect a significant increase in child care tuition as it will be the only option to keep our doors open and our center operational. When Child Care Counts started our highest paid teacher was making \$14.00 per hour. Now our highest paid teacher who has been with us for five years is making \$16.50 per hour. While it is still not enough it is what we can afford with our Child Care Counts funding and much less than they deserve for their loyalty and dedication to us and this profession.

(54022) The only thing keeping any form of staff retention for me is the incentive pay Teachers receive each pay check. The funds also allowed me to increase all staff wages to a more realistic compensation based on current inflation. Teachers are making on average \$5-\$6 more per hour and is made ONLY possible through this funding and small tuition increase.

(54023) Having just started my childcare business the CCC program has helped tremendously. The previous owner was severely undercharging and I have already raised rates by a reasonable amount. While rates still need to be raised to meet needs, CCC has helped to make this a slower process so that families are not having to shoulder the burden of steep tuition increases. Without this funding the program would be forced to shut down.

(54981) Staff use the additional income from the CCC Funding to make ends meet and in not receiving, they would look for higher paying employment.

(54025) We will be closing Plymouth Children's Center 3 in June 2023. Since the arrival of full day 4k we can't find staff to work before/after school hours only or split shifts. Burlington Area School District says they will take over the wrap around services we have been providing for over 20 years beginning Fall 2023. They aren't promising care for families when they have No School Days, leaving a void in the community. We won't be able to help fill this void because we won't have teachers on "stand by" to work with the school age children when BASD has inservice or no school days.

(54115) With the funding we've been able to do minimal tuition increases and maximum wage increases. Without this funding that will flip and tuition will need to increase and wages will not be increased.

(54130) Loss of income from parents pulling children due to fear of covid so smaller group size decreases the amount of tuition coming in.

(54136) We are a 5 star rated non-profit child care center, we have been short staffed for 5+ years. It has gotten worse during the last 3 years. If we have to reduce teacher pay we will lose staff again and need to close at least 2 classrooms. Another note- we are averaging 2 requests a day for child care. Our waiting list is over 100 children long for spots that will only come open if a family leaves our program. We have had one child under the age of 6 leave our program in the last year.

(54140) The child care counts program is the only reason we have been able to retain staff. We are struggling to get new staff because our wages are just not competitive enough. In order to offer higher pay, we would need to significantly raise our tuition. The Child Care Counts Program is essential to keeping this industry alive. We are drowning in staff shortages, waitlists, and lack of qualified employees.

(54143) All of our support for the Child Care Counts funding has increased our staff wages which help us maintain them. We are hoping that we will receive continued support so we can continue to increase our quality of staff as well as maintain what we have!

(54161) I just don't understand how a rewarding job can not keep people who want to work. So I give bonuses to keep the teachers I have and without CCC funding they would go where the money is.

(54162) We are finally able to provide educators with a livable wage however if this funding would end the cost would fall directly fall onto the backs of parents that already struggle with affordability

(54165) Funds have allowed my program to offer hiring incentives and competitive pay thus allowing us to hire high quality staff with the hopes of retaining them over time.

(54166) Since we started receiving the Child Care Counts funding in 2020, we have been able to update our building, hire high-quality staff, and retain our families. We appreciate our teachers so much and have been able to pay them more than we previously offered, but it still isn't enough at times. They still fall below starting wages at large corporations, but they have a heart of gold that cannot be replaced and deserve more than what we can offer!

In January, we decided to raise our rates in the anticipation of the Child Care Counts funding ending in 2024. However, with the 50% decrease coming up in May, that will force us to raise our rates again and once the funding is completely out next year, our rates will be almost unreachable for many families in our area, even if we continue to raise our rates by a small percentage each year.

Our staff is highly qualified and high-quality. We are extremely picky with who we hire on our team and want the very best teachers for the children in our care. Our families trust us with their most precious gifts each day and they deserve to be loved and cared for in very best way. High-quality teachers come at a high price and our payroll budget reaches about 65% of our revenue each week, leaving us with very little left over for our other expenses (taxes, insurance, mortgage, utilities, groceries, materials, etc.)

A large cut in our funding would be devastating, especially since it's unexpected and much sooner than we anticipated. Will will lose our families and our staff and be forced out of business if this continues in a downward spiral.

(54170) We absolutely love and utilize the grants. They are necessary for the success of our program

(54220) Being able to give the teachers more money is the reason we are able to keep them working

(54220) We currently have two child care sites. One of the sites has children enrolled ages 2 through 4 years. The second site has children enrolled ages 6 weeks through 2 years. We currently have 1 infant room closed, a toddler room at 1/2 capacity and a 2 year old classroom closed due to not enough staff. We have a huge waiting list with a large number of infants and toddlers on it. There is a huge need for care in the community. We have been currently using the CCC money to help offset closed classrooms. With a reduction of the money my fear is that we will have to close the center that has the younger children enrolled.

(54220) We can not get any staff to work for the low pay, no health insurance. We are non-profit and survive on our own in all aspects of running the center (staff/maintenance/food etc)

(54247) The CCC has allowed us to raise teacher wages while keeping costs to parents flat.

(54301) We are concerned that the increase we will need to make without continued funding through CCC will be too much of a burden for parents to carry. This may result in closing our program.

(54303) The funds have allowed us to give teachers a monthly bonus which has helped retain staff. In addition, we have not raised tuition rates in 2 years which has been helpful to the families.

(54311) As many of our families have stressed the burden cost of childcare is to their families. We are on the low end of Average Brown County Rates and still have families credit cards coming back declined. If Child Care Counts decreases or ends, we may not be able to get the income to pay

teachers wages/income. They will most likely quit and find a new job. If we can no longer find staffing, our Child Care Center will have no choice but to close.

(54401) Child Care Counts has helped my group center of 56 stay afloat! Without this money, my accountant said I would be way negative which mean I probably could not keep my center open. Sad part is we have a huge wait list. No one takes Child Care seriously anymore! It's very sad, what will happen when us older generation retires?? Child Care will be no more. Thank you to Child Care Counts for helping my center. I pay \$32k in wages monthly and they still should be making more!

(54403) We were able to provide four families with tuition help.

(54403) In order not to participate in the "Great Resignation", we used the funds exclusively for monthly bonuses and greatly needed wage increases. Because of the eventual ending of the program, we now have to make up that grant money with tuition money. Between June 2023 and June 2024, we will have increased rates 25%. In a 3-year span (2020-2023), wages for teachers have increased 60+%. We lost no key personnel during this time.

(54406) We have been able to provide wage increases to teaching staff such that our staff have been able to remain in our employ for two years straight. Also, we have acquired upgrades to our facility: replaced 50 year old flooring, child sized furnishings and storage and educational materials. We also gave refunds to families when we had to close the center three times due to Covid-19. We have not raised our rates in over two years.

(54409) Child Care counts funding has provided the dollars to give our teachers bonuses on a regular basis, bringing their wages up to \$16 per hour. In addition, the quality funds have helped to defray some of my increased costs for food and supplies. It has allowed us to decrease our loss significantly. We still are operating at a loss as our staff receive a full benefit package but my budget is looking much better than it did.

(54409) Being a newly opened center, CCC funding is necessary to ensure sustainability and pay my staff the wages they deserve!

(54155) these funds help us to pay our staff a livable wage and still provide excellent service to our families in the community.

(54411)

it is so hard to hire teachers without the childcare counts incentives and keeping my current teachers with the wages other places are paying. Childcare count helps, and with the added increase in groceries supplies it helped us stay a float.

(54421) If we lose the care counts funding I don't see any way that we would be able to keep our doors open.

Currently we struggle to hire teachers due to the low pay. Our staff could go to McDonalds and be paid more per hour than we can pay our teachers, and that is including the money received from the recruitment and retention grant, 100% goes to our staff as monthly bonuses. I, as the director, could go to any near by factory and start, entry level, at almost double my salary, with no responsibility and would get paid for all of the hours I worked.

If we were to raise the rates for parents, over 20% to compensate for the loss of funding, I am sure we would lose families, especially those with multiple children.

All businesses are struggling to hire and keep employees, but if this extra funding for childcare is cut, it will mean the closing of even more childcare, causing a ripple effect of parents not being able to work because they have no care for their children.

(54426) Our staff rely on the extra income they are receiving from Child Care Counts. If this goes away, we may lose staff due to having to decrease their wages.

(54428) Having this funding has helped us pay wages and purchase new items that we would not be able to afford.

(54437) Being able to pay bonuses to staff has helped them to pay bills and make up for low wages however they are still very low paid. It would be nice to know that we could count on counts to help pay higher wages instead of just bonuses.

(54449) It has kept us afloat, but also allowed us to get closer to a living wage with staff

(54449) I already can't pay a competitive, livable wage and have been short staffed for months. I will have to decrease enrollment if I can't find someone soon or lose even just one more at this point. Tuition will also need to be raised. However that increase doesn't begin to cover the actual need.

(54449) Having to tell parents we have open rooms but not enough staff.

(54449) Paying the staff extra is keeping them employed longer.

(54913) We just opened our group center, and promised parents we could help either costs, so this is really hard on us

(54451) We need this funding!

(54452) We have noticed that we are able to retain our current teaching staff because we have been able to stay wage competitive with the other local area businesses.

(54455) We are the only group center in the Mosinee community that provided care for children under 4.

(54457) The Child Care Counts income helps keep our program afloat and allows us to pay teachers more marketable wages which in turn, helps us stay staffed. Without this extra money each month, I'm honestly unsure if we would make it.

(54467) With the child care counts money I have been able to increase my staff wages by \$2.00-\$3.00 per hour. Each staff member receives a bonus monthly. My child care rates have remained the same and I haven't had to raise them in over a year.

(54476) These funds have been very valuable to our site. We were able to help struggling families, provide a safe and quality program and most importantly for me-retain my staff. I have been able to offer more professional development (currently 3 staff getting their Associates Degree), bonuses and just special incentives to always make our work culture positive. I have seen my staff really pull together in a stressful time and I always make sure that I let them know verbally how valuable their contributions are to our program.

(54481) We gave our staff substantial wage increases to keep them from working at McDonald's!

(54481) Reduced hours of operation. We had 13 staff before covid and 28/33 child slots filled. Now we have 3 staff and 16 children. We need staff and money/benefits to attract qualified staff. We have just increased our rate beginning June 1, 2023.

(54481) Because of the additional funding we have been able to increase wages for staff. Our base rate has increased substantially. Without this funding we would also need to increase parent tuition considerably to compensate for the loss. Rules are more stringent for food service and food costs are substantially higher as are the costs of utilities and any of our operational expenses. As a DCF licensed program, it's important to us that we maintain a high standard, but how do we compete with fast food starting wages with \$17+ an hour and their overhead costs and day to day requirements for operation are probably a fraction of the costs of child care. From advanced security systems, to specific classroom furnishings to all of the required reporting paperwork. Taking additional staff just to keep current with the paperwork. It's a lot. We are thankful for the quality staff we have, but we must pay

them well to keep them. Or they can go somewhere else where they get paid much more to do much less. And our #1 priority is to provide a safe and caring atmosphere for the children we are responsible for. It has to be a priority to maintain additional funding for operations. Like public education, the annual funding they receive is enough to compensate staff well, with the amazing benefits they also receive. We are not there and children are children - from infant through 12th grade!

(54482) We currently use the CCC to offer higher wages for our staff members and a monthly bonus for retention. If we cannot do that, we will not lower wages, but will discontinue offering the bonuses, which will result in staff leaving. We just raised rates to already stay afloat, so will not do so again, and even so, it won't be enough to touch what the CC allows us to offer. We will eventually end up having to close doors due to lack of profit when closing rooms.

(54487) Without this funding we will need to increase rates between 25 and 50% to cover costs.

(54487) Currently our program relies on our child care counts payment to keep our valuable staff at a livable wage. At the same time we have been able to increase our program to a higher quality of care that we may not have otherwise been able to achieve without this program.

(54494) we are in central WI and the layoffs and loss of jobs has made it substantial we stay open. we have pushed through the Covid, the shortage of staff and low wages only to have to work harder with less people to help cover.

(54426) We were struggling to find teachers as we all know the pay isn't high in childcare. It got to the point that we had to close on Fridays to cover shifts and keep our staff from working mandatory overtime and risk burnout and departure from the centers. Since the grants we have been able to increase our wages by almost 4.00 an hour to be competitive with local fast food restaurants. If the grants end, we will need to increase our rates by 40-50 dollars a week to cover the increased wages. This will be a hardship for many parents and ultimately could be the end of the center as parents may decide to stay home and only have a one parent income.

(54541) Our program struggles with finding and keeping staff as we not able to compete with the wages of other programs in our area, the Child care Counts funding we receive is to provide bonuses to our staff for the hard work and dedication they have working in the child care field.

(54552) Families can't afford to pay more for childcare so upping the tuition isn't the best idea, so without this money it will be extremely difficult to pay the bills. Plus my staff relies on the monthly bonuses as well.

(54552) We have used funds in a variety of ways. Sometimes employees earn a quarterly stipend. We have used them for increasing education (coursework), and we have used funds to attain resources to better engage students in social emotional learning.

(54568) If CCC ends, parents will see an increase of about \$350.00 per month across the board. I will likely lose families to in home care and will not have enough money to continue to operate. My center has been serving families in the community for 37 years. We are desperate for the CCC benefit.

(54986) Without the funding from CCC, We will lose staff and have to close rooms.

(54601) Childcare counts program has given our center the accessibility to pay our teachers a higher wage. We have been able to raise our starting wages from \$12-\$14 an hour to \$16-\$20 an hour. Without the support of these funds we will have to raise our tuition rates to match the loss we would lose in income. This would raise our parents tuition from \$258 per week to \$310 per week. We would probably price ourselves out of a lot of parents affordability, causing an even more drastic workforce shortage because they no longer have childcare. If we lost families and could not replace them to meet our budget we would have to shut down our facility cause 116 children to lose their spots. We are a 5 star youngster rated center with exceptional quality and leadership. If we couldn't make it other centers wouldn't make it either. Childcare would be lost and unregulated childcare would take its place causing

less quality for our children. Children's brains develop 90% in the first 7 years of their life. It is imperative to they have quality, nurturing, AFFORDABLE childcare.

(54601) With the childcare counts payments we have been able to help cover the price increases of all our consumable items and the increased wages. The cost of our consumables and wages have increased by 60 percent. Without childcare counts, our center would be forced to raise the tuition rates, which in turn, would create inaccessibility.

(54601) We currently have our infant room closed and have open spots in all rooms. However, due to staffing we cannot enroll additional children. We also have a very long waiting list with calls coming in each day.

Due to staffing we also had to reduce hours of operation during the last two weeks of 2022. Most of our staff are college students and their housing closed requiring them to leave the area.

(54601) Our preschool has been here since 1962. We have a great relationship with our community, and are lucky enough to have dedicated staff and plenty of families interested in our programs. The funding we have received from the CCC grants has allowed us to increase our staff wages (our staff are still making less than any other entry position in fast food or retail) and keep our tuition rates stable. If these payments end, we will most likely lose our highly qualified staff to careers outside of the early childhood field (who can justify working in child care when you can do an easier job for twice the pay?). This would definitely have a negative impact on our quality of care, as well as the number of children we are able to care for. Ending these grant payments would be detrimental to our community, as it puts a heavier financial burden on families, prevents employees from being paid a fair wage, and ultimately decreases the number of children we are able to serve.

(54603) Cares funding saved my center from closing. Unsure what to do

(54426) We were struggling to find teachers as we all know the pay isn't high in childcare. It got to the point that we had to close on Fridays to cover shifts and keep our staff from working mandatory overtime and risk burnout and departure from the centers. Since the grants we have been able to increase our wages by almost 4.00 an hour to be competitive with local fast food restaurants. If the grants end, we will need to increase our rates by 40-50 dollars a week to cover the increased wages. This will be a hardship for many parents and ultimately could be the end of the center as parents may decide to stay home and only have a one parent income.

(54615) The child care counts money has help our center stay open, to provide care for the families in our community. We increased our staff wages to bring in more quality staff and now we may lose families because we have no choice but to raise our tuition rates to stay open.

(54982) We have had a very high rate of staff turn over due to the wages paid and possibility of having to decrease wages.

(54636) I am Amanda Christianson from Rural Holmen, WI. I am writing to implore you for continued support for Child Care Counts funding. I opened as a family child care, licensed for 8, in my home in 2001, when I was pregnant with my second child. Two children in child care, even back then, would have cost my whole paycheck and I was working at a child care center. My friend was also licensed in her home and after 10 years, we decided to join and became a group child care, Great Outdoors Learning Center, licensed in my home in 2011 for 12 children. This was challenging in WI because there are not separate rules for group child care in a home, so we had to meet stricter rules, but that's info for another time.

Being located between Holmen and Mindoro, but in the Melrose-Mindoro school district, child care is even harder to find with only a handful of providers in the area. I have increased my licensed capacity several times to help more families and am now licensed for 18 children. We have a waiting list right now with 48 children on it, some that have been on it for 2 years, who are still asking, for child care.

For the first time in 20+ years of providing child care, I have felt better financially supported. It's a

struggle to make child care affordable for parents and be able to stay afloat as a homeowner and as a business. I have had loyal employees for the past 12 years and struggle to pay them a fair wage. I have used the Child Care Counts to increase their wages and offer bonuses, in hopes of retaining them. One has left to work for the USPS and unfortunately, I couldn't offer a \$7/hour raise to keep her. I worry that my current employees could or have to leave for other employment, as I can still only pay them \$13.50/hr and little in other benefits.

Child Care Counts has been so beneficial to our program, as well. We have been able to buy supplies, such as sun protective swim suits, rain suits, snowsuits, good mittens and boots to help keep our outdoor focus strong. Most of the parents we serve wouldn't be able to afford these and we are able to go outside up to 7 hours a day with this appropriate gear. Our children thrive on our outdoor play time! It's so good for children to have as much outdoor time as possible.

I have put my heart and soul into providing quality child care, taking classes and researching how to help children and their families for years. Child Care Counts has provided the funds for me and my teachers to get better quality training, as well. If we lose Child Care Counts funding, I may lose my exceptional teachers and would definitely struggle to hire replacements. I would have to increase rates more than a dollar a day to help compensate for increases in food, supplies and utilities. I may, ultimately, have to close to support my family. It would be devastating to the area and to my child care families. I hope that Child Care Counts is important enough to you to continue to support funding. Families desperately need quality child care and Child Care Counts supports families in so many ways.

(54636) We have 30% of our space available for enrollment. We do not have enough staff for our current location .

(54449) Our center sits miles away from other centers in Dane County, where rates are higher and teachers are paid more. We are competing with neighboring counties and have raised staff rates significantly to help bring more children into our program. If we lose these funds or any more staff we may have to combine classrooms and care for less children in 2024.

(54636) I wasn't expecting this sudden decrease and changes including that we are no longer allowed to apply any funding towards mortgage. It has set in a bit of panic over our summer staffing and plans. I may have to decrease the amount of children enrolled to cover staffing. This may have to continue into fall/winter. I hate to cut my teacher bonuses, but I don't know that I can continue at \$300 a month. I won't decrease their raises/wages, but may have to increase tuition rates for families by more than I intended in September. I do a cost of living at \$1/day/year, but with the immense cost of living with everything going up so much, I may have to raise rates significantly in September and possibly again in January if the Child Care Counts is not supported for 2024 by the State of WI.

(54636) We have a staffing shortage. We are having to combine rooms to make it work. Staff are getting stressed out because more on their plates with staffing. We are not at capacity because of staffing

(54636) We are having a staffing shortage. We are not able to pay competitive wages

(54982) Staff rely on the income received from CCC funds to pay for gas to get to work.

(54650) Staff deserves to be paid well

(54650) I have 3 classrooms shut down currently, a total of 50 children that I could enroll, but I don't have the staff to fill them. If I lose the CCC funding I would have to either raise rates or close my doors.

(54650) Due to the funding we have been able to increase teachers pay...but not enough yet. Culvers still makes more than my staff and it is hard to keep good staff with the pay that we can offer. On a positive note: due to the funding we have been able to provide parent outreach events 4 times this year. We have an event called Book Munchers where the parents come and with their child we read a book, make a keepsake craft, have a yummy snack, play games and activities.

(54656) Honestly, Covid hit us hard. We would not have been able to keep the center open without the Child Care Counts Funding. And with the increases in costs and raises I needed to give to staff, I am unsure if we will be able to keep running without the Funding help. Running a Child Care Center is expensive, and the income is just not sufficient enough to run a good quality program. There are so many costs that come with running a program. Not only the normal bills of having a building (Electric, Payroll, Taxes, Background check fees, Mortgage, Gas, etc.) but also costs of license, food, janitorial supplies, art supplies, replacement items that breaks, office supplies, snow removal, playground equipment, teacher supplies, maintenance, and many more. These things all add up quickly and cannot be avoided. The funding that we receive from Child Care Counts help to cover these costs. Being able to give staff raises and hire quality teachers is so very important! We truly appreciate and need this extra funding to keep quality Child Care Programs open and running!

(54660)

801 (7035) Tammy Turnmire

(54660) The need for childcare, staff is high. That we need to make it affordable and make staff feel wanted and appreciate. They most of the issue with staff is that they are not getting engouh to live on.

(54660) Decreasing funding will for sure close Centers and/or greatly affect their operating/programming.

(54665) By lossing the extra money, I am not sure what will happen with our daycare. And will be hard to keep staff.

(54665) It will be hard with wages and expensive to keep our daycare open

(54667) With childcare counts not only do I feel stable and can give bonus or raises. I can also provide some retirement for employees. We've been able to get new equipment for the children and provide a stable tuition for parents in our small town.

(54701) We have a very similiar story as Brooke's Child Care program. We have been utilizing the additional child care counts funding to increase staff wages and offer a monthly stipend for our teachers in an effort to retain qualified staff and recruit new staff. Even with this additional funding our starting wage is lower than Target, Kwik Trip, Culvers, etc. We just lost a veteran teacher with 10+ years in the field to an office position where she will be making \$25.00/hr. This teacher loved working with young children, but would be making \$10.00 more per hour in her new position. There is not a single person that could blame her for leaving the field. Unfortunately, when these qualified staff leave the field we are left with an ever shrinking pool of applicants, most of whom do not have any education in the field and very little experience. As it is important to us to continue to run a quality program; we still have many full-time positions open as we refuse to throw a body into a classroom to just maintain ratios. I currently have one three year old classroom completely closed and have one infant and one toddler classroom at a lower capacity so we can stay at ratio for one teacher. We currently have 60+ families(many with mulitple children) on our waiting list and approximately 30 child care slots that we are not able to fill due to the inability to staff the classrooms. This is not only a child care industry crisis but affects Wisconsin's workforce as a whole. We have heard from many people that they have had to make the tough decision to not return to work due to their inability to find child care. We have a 30 year reputation in our community of providing quality care, we need your support to continue to do so.

(53566) High staff turn over due to wages and stress of shortages has caused quality care to rapidly decrease. Some families have been told they cannot come on specific days due to staff shortages.

(54701) We have used our grant money to increase all of our teachers pay, if the grant money stops I'm unsure if we can even raise rates enough to continue paying the same rates while at the same time have parents able to afford it. The future of our program will most definitely be up in the air based upon what happens with the grant program.

(54701) We are a small Christian preschool which is a ministry of our church. We are funded by our tuition, with additional funding from our church to make ends meet. Since Covid, finances for our church are down significantly. The Child Care Counts funding has meant that we have been able to continue to stay open and pay our staff their same salaries without needing additional church funding. Without this program, additional funding through our church is likely not available at this time. We would need to significantly increase our tuition costs (we're already at the top of the market) or we would need to limit or close our program.

(54703) We raised wages to attract more staff, but so did every other business in our community. High school students can get entry level jobs for \$15+per hour . When I tell perspective employees that I can only start them at \$14 per hour and they will work long hours, need loads of training and have lots of responsibility. They obviously choose the higher paying, easier job.

(54703) If funding is lost we will either have to significantly raise tuition or we will have to shut down.

(54724) The Child Care Counts program has provided us with a breath of fresh air that we never thought would come. This last 1-2 years have been more challenging than ever before with a constant lack of quality staff, childcare shortages, challenging child behaviors -- the list goes on. We WILL NOT and CANNOT continue this way. It isn't feasible. Our teachers need MORE support, MORE training, MORE funding, MORE time, MORE acknowledgement and Child Care Counts has started to push for that. We are truly grateful for everything CCC has provided so far, but please understand how far we still have to go. We won't survive without it.

(54724) Child Care counts has allowed us to raise our wages for our teachers to half of what they deserve. If child care counts is not renewed, we will be forced to close. We cannot keep up with the stress we are currently under let alone what will happen if we lose that.

(54742) We have been providing our teachers with monthly bonuses instead of wage increases. We know we wouldn't be able to keep up with a wage increase should the funding stop. We need the funding to continue to keep our teachers and to try to recruit others!

Due to the CCC funding we are receiving; we were able to limit our fee increases to the parents' fees to just 3% this year. Parents are experiencing increased costs from too many other sources every day, just as we all are! We didn't want to add to the current inflation rate. Again, in thanks to the CCC funding, we are not! There will be a tipping point where parents will decide organized childcare is too expensive if costs are increased too much. As long as the current funding continues, we will be able to provide affordable care. If it doesn't, we would have to increase our rates substantially. Most likely causing the tipping point for many families.

(54751) I have used the dollars provided to raise salaries, make facility improvements that were much overdue and replace very worn materials and equipment. Without those funds each month I cannot sustain the wage increases made with those dollars without raising tuition rates substantially.

(54768) My name is Deanne Patten. I am the owner/administrator/director of Firehouse Friends Childcare Center in Stanley, WI. We are licensed for 104 children and we currently have 146 children enrolled with part-time children. This summer we are expanding to a 2nd location of 25 school age children from May-August due to the overwhelming need for summer care. We currently employ 34 staff that vary in age from 17 to 64 years old.

Child Care Counts has made a huge impact on our facility. Pre COVID our employees' starting wage on average was \$9/hour. It was nearly impossible to recruit and retain employees due to the low wages and high burnout rate. With the assistance of Child Care Counts, we have been able to raise our starting wage to \$14.00/hour starting next month. This continued monthly funding has been a lifeline for our business and employees. Child Care Counts has truly stabilized our business where we have been able open a second location for the summer, as we now have more competitive wages to recruit and retain current employees.

We understand that difficult decisions will need to be made for this budget process and I want you all to know the true and fragile reality we are in, with the decisions you make with this budget.

In the event that Child Care Counts funding does truly end in January of 2024, our center will have to face 2 real life choices.

1) Raise our rates by at least 27%, which means a family with 2 children goes from paying on average of \$1,668/month to \$2,286/month: a \$618 increase per month per family of 2.

2) Lower our staff wages back to \$9/hour, which we all know in our current economy will make us no longer competitive and we will lose most of our employees to higher paying jobs. Without affordable, available, high-quality childcare, which includes competitively paid childcare staff, our society cannot function as a whole.

In recap, our staff are not earning a livable wage. We need to get all childcare staff across the state to a livable wage so they can provide for their family's needs without placing our overhead costs solely on raising rates to parents. If staff were receiving a livable wage with benefits, we would not have the high staff turnover, we would have more stability for the children, and be able to expand availability for parents that would continue to increase quality childcare across the state.

(54768) To reduce childcare counts funding at this point will cause us to have to start raising rates significantly to our families. Families have come and talked to me and they are so worried and scared. Several are going to punch numbers to determine if it even pays for them to work with the raise in tuition.

(54806) The Childcare Counts monies have allowed me to increase wages so that I am able to finally get applicants into my program and also retain the staff that I have.

(54806) have worked at Tree Top since 1990, after school and working summers in between college semesters. But Tree Top has been a part of me since I was 5 months old as my mom Susan Pratt founded Tree Top in 1973. It wasn't always my plan to work in child care, as a matter of fact I loved science and wanted to work in a lab doing chemistry. While in college, I decided to switch from a Chemistry major and go the route of teaching science so I could have my summers off. While at the end of my student teaching, my husband and I became pregnant with our first son. I finished in January of 1997 and agreed to work full time for her while she was having a staff transition and center expansion. I fell in love with "the job" and never left, not even that September when the local middle school principal called me to offer me my first teaching position. Through the first years I loved that I could be with my children and work with my best friend and mentor, my mom. It was so easy since we shared similar philosophies. It didn't take long before I agreed to take over and buy the business when she was ready to retire. She always said to me "you have the energy to take Tree Top to the next level".

Retirement didn't happen as she passed away from cancer in 2009. I had slowly moved into more of a director role towards the end still with her guidance and mentorship. I became sole director in 2009 and purchased Tree Top in 2010. I requested and was granted to have my license start date be May 18th which was the same day Tree Top was founded in 1973. Being an employee first really helped me to be an effective director, I immediately implemented some changes, like paid holidays and wage increases. I decided to deal with my grief of losing my mom by getting my Masters degree in Early Childhood Education, so I could walk the talk. That was one of the best decisions I made. I kept hearing my mom's words "you can take Tree Top to the next level" through each course and assignment. I felt very fortunate with my cohort, with every best new practice I learned about I could implement immediately. I didn't have to get approval from a principal, director or board member. I could go to my cohort and tell them how these changes have improved our program overnight.

I also began accepting students from WITC for practicums and this was the start of becoming creative with staffing. I felt I always had the best choice of staff in the area by seeing these students in practice, many becoming full time employees. I've always been a lead by example manager so I was also able to get my staff on board to become lifelong learners like me. I would sponsor them through TEACH scholarships, they could see how I managed running a business full time, doing a full time masters program, that certainly I would support them taking a course at a time too.

Through the years of being a life long learner some changes that Tree Top have gone through I feel

has improved the program. Tree Top is play-based and child directed. If we can spark that love of learning in someone before they go off to school then that will stick with them throughout the years. We provide them opportunities to take ownership in their learning... that wind turbine we can see over the trees sparks a question in someone....we dive into "what is wind?"...which transcends into power in general. When we explore things that are valid to them it sticks. And it drives more questions. We're doing what we are meant to do. This is why I also am still the preschool teacher, these connections are the most rewarding of the job. Well that and I get to still do science. Put a mirror in a pan of water and watch a rainbow appear on the ceiling. Magical! They are fully engaged. We can prove to parents through these observations (that we attach to the early learning standards) that their children are learning through play. We celebrate their learning by going through their portfolios at parent/teacher conferences.

It is getting even harder finding quality staff, even with extra stimulus money. The numbers of people going into the field of child care is declining every year. Because I'm so passionate about the early childhood field I have tried to do my part locally to keep it going. When our local technical college had their instructor retire, they didn't fill the position. Instead the program went online and subsequently enrollment declined. I agreed to adjunct teach on some Saturdays so they could offer in person days in addition to their online format. I also agreed to adjunct teach at Northland College for their courses required for the early childhood minor. Anything to keep students in the early childhood field. I offer free child care to my employees as an enticement. I offer retirement options and support them through scholarships and paid holidays and sick days.

This May 18th Tree Top celebrates 50 years and as we have become accepted as a nature preschool with the Natural Start Alliance we are still evolving; always striving for continuous improvement and my mom's words still echo "bring Tree Top to the next level". When my brother was 2 he couldn't say my name Theresa, instead calling me Treetop. I think I was destined for it. Even with Tree Top being a successful and well established program, without the continued Child Care Counts payments I will not be able to pay the staff that I have without increasing parent payments by 30%. The parents cannot afford a 30% increase so that then no doubt will be the beginning of the end.

(54810) Parents in our rural area find it hard to pay for child care services as it is. The majority of parents in our center are lower middle class, who make too much to get help through WI Shares, but are barely making it by paying their child care bill out of pocket. If we need to raise tuition due to lack of funding through the grant, many of our families WILL NOT be able to afford us. We are a high quality center that focuses on child development and what is best for the child. These parents will be forced to go to unregulated family centers that are not reliable, nor up to our safety standards, or not work at all. It is very sad and frustrating to think about how this could change the workforce capabilities in the state, and how the children will be negatively affected.

(54425) We were struggling to find teachers as we all know the pay isn't high in childcare. It got to the point that we had to close on Fridays to cover shifts and keep our staff from working mandatory overtime and risk burnout and departure from the centers. Since the grants we have been able to increase our wages by almost 4.00 an hour to be competitive with local fast food restaurants. If the grants end, we will need to increase our rates by 40-50 dollars a week to cover the increased wages. This will be a hardship for many parents and ultimately could be the end of the center as parents may decide to stay home and only have a one parent income.

(54812) We have been able to keep the tuition affordable for our families by receiving this funding help. I have also been able to attract staff by increasing wages and giving regular bonuses, which are still lower than most occupations. By receiving this extra funding I have been able to afford the upkeep of my daycare, pay the increased payroll taxes from increased wages and update toys/equipment. I am so thankful for this program, as I would have had to close because of lower wages and higher cost for families.

(54812) In order to maintain our level of quality program we were able to increase teacher wages to get good teachers. We did close down one room in order to maintain our other rooms. We have already

developed our budget, signed contracts with staff and families. I will lose my teachers if I reduce wages and lose families if I now go back and increase our tuition to the rate we would need to operate. I am not making a lot of money as a childcare owner, but rather providing a great service that our community needs.

(54812) We are a Head Start

(54950) Program B is critical. Hiring had stalled until we increased starting wages \$3/hour using Program B funds. Program B has also assisted with Staff Retention. Most staff are receiving an additional \$4/hour.

(54843) The extra funding that we have received has allowed our daycare to stay open. Without the funding, we would be forced to close, leaving many families without care. In our small town, there is already a shortage of child care options. If we closed, being one of the largest in the area, it would affect many businesses too, as many of their employees (our parents) would be unable to work. So many businesses are struggling to hire people as it is so it could really affect them also. Also, knowing that the funding would most likely expire in January, we have cut our expenses as much as we can to try to save money for the future, but with the rising costs of items, it has been extremely difficult.

(54868) This has helped us retain and hire quality staff. We will lose them when funding is done and most likely close.

(54868) The Child Care Counts funds have helped to keep our program afloat. Without it, we would not be able to meet payroll each month, even with the very minimal staff we have. It has been a struggle to find additional staff, even "warm bodies", and even harder to keep the current staff upbeat and positive amid their long hours and daily frustrations. We have been providing staff with monthly bonuses in the hopes of keeping them, but even that isn't enough to carry them through the tough times.

(54872) If we lose this funding, there will be NO licensed group childcare in Burnett County since I own the only two centers and my business cannot survive without the funding. I have used the funding to increase teacher's wages by 27% and their wage still is not comparable to a person working in fast food. The remainder of the funds have been used to pay for increased costs of supplies.

(54880) We so much appreciate the extra help, but we are having a very hard time. We increased some wages, but we can't compete with Kwik Trip, Target, even McDonalds for wages. We can't charge the parents more for childcare, they can't afford more. It has been so hard to get staff. If we do get staff they don't stay. Reasons are all the same...too stressful for the pay, can go to McDonalds and not have the stress and more pay, or they have no work ethic and don't want to do anything but sit. I had one quit the other day because it wasn't worth taking classes that are required by State. I don't know what we can do at this point to salvage quality care if nobody wants to work and we can't pay more. It is awful out here.

(54901) I believe we have been able to retain quality teachers and not lose them to district jobs with our stabilization payments

(54901) The money has helped us tremendously - we are able to stay open and parents can still afford to send their children to us.

(54902) We use the retention funds to provide direct bonuses to our child care workers; this additional funding is the reason that some workers remain in the field - they finally feel they are being recognized for their hard work!

(54902) We have a hard time finding staff to fill position and there is a huge need for childcare.

(54904) Without these counts, our doors would be closed.

(54904) We are paying \$18 to \$25 per hour for positions that were paying \$9 to \$14 pre-pandemic. Given the abundance of job opportunities that pay what we are paying thanks to the Child Care Counts

payments, we will lose staff immediately if we attempt to lower wages. We have a little room for increasing the tuition but not enough to cover everything we will be losing if the program discontinued. We will be at serious risk of closure I'm 2024 if no funding is available.

(54904) We use the Child Care Counts for rent, utilities and for staff bonuses. If we did not have that, it is quite possible we would not have enough staff to cover ratios for the children enrolled. They depend on their retention bonuses as part of their pay. The market for staffing right now is practically non-existent. If they can go to Target or Wal-mart for more than what I can pay, they will do it. I have no other options but to utilize these funds for staff because the tuition coming in is not enough. Our families already pay so much. It is a very vicious cycle.

(54911) It's helped us keep teachers with the increased wages/bonuses provided by CCC. Sooo thankful for it!

(53218) Our teachers and teaching assistants work very hard for very little unfortunately, we were hiring teaching assistants at a rate of 11.40 to 12.00 an hour (depending upon experience) but with the CCC money we added an additional \$5 an hour to that making it 16.40 to 17. Our teachers are typically hired at 16.50 to 23.00 an hour based upon training and experience but with the CCC money we again added \$5 an hour making it 21.50 to 28.00. I want to be able to pay my teachers a livable wage so they can afford to pay their bills/rent/food/expenses to survive day to day. We have been able to add a stipend of \$5 an hour for every hour worked onto the pay of each employee since the CCC money was awarded and staff have been very appreciative. Especially after COVID when times were challenging. Our staff have been budgeting on this money for the past year and a half, we are afraid we will lose even more staff if/when funding gets cut and that may make it so we can not serve the children and families we are funded to serve. As a Head Start program, we have high standards to meet and it is VERY challenging to find quality staff when we do not have the money to compensate for their skills they have to share with our agency.

(54911) We have chosen to raise wages with the Child Care Counts funding.

We still are in need of teachers to open more slots. We find that we lose teachers to private businesses that can readily change prices to recover revenue or to the school district who are also suffering teacher shortages and still pay better. Without funding we would have not recovered as well as we have (90%).

(54911) The child care counts program has helped keep our current staff in the child care field, we have lost over 6 staff members this last year and it would have been more without this incentive. With losing that many staff members and having a very difficult time hiring new staff we are running under capacity in multiple rooms which has been hard on the bottom revenue line. The child care counts has helped in our revenue flow to continue to pay staff a living wage and run our program. I am worried that when this program ends we may lose more staff members as they can be paid hiring wages working elsewhere not in the child care field.

(54911) The Child Care Counts Funding has allowed us to stay fully staffed the past year and maintain our high-quality standards. Our center recently celebrated its 50th year in business, and over those 50 years, we have always had a reputation for low child to staff ratios, well trained and experienced teachers, and minimal turnover. Providing quality care such as this is extremely expensive, and parents can no longer afford the true cost of childcare. Although we are fortunate to also receive some private grants and donations from our community, the monthly income from Child Care Counts is the crucial revenue we have needed to continue operating at full capacity and retain our workers. If funding is eliminated next year, we will be forced to make significant cuts to our budget. Since over 75% of our budget goes directly to salaries and benefits, this will most likely mean cutting teachers, eliminating benefits such as prep time, coaching, health insurance, retirement and mental health services, as well as scaling back administrative and support staff positions. These cuts will drastically impact our quality of care and our ability to serve more vulnerable populations which seek out our center (low-middle income families needing financial assistance, non-native speakers and refugee families, parents with children who have exceptional needs or past trauma) and I fear the combination of higher ratios in classrooms and even lower compensation will ultimately force our teachers to leave

the field for better paying jobs to support their families. This program has not been about "bonus money" to us, it has been about trying to somewhat compete with wages being offered at every retail store and fast food restaurant, about keeping our tuition somewhat affordable for families (if you can consider \$300/week and 25-30% of your household income affordable), and about doing everything we can to retain and support enough qualified staff in classrooms to keep children safe and learning despite significant social-emotional delays and increased behavioral challenges caused by the pandemic. Early childhood education needs continued funding if it is to survive, and my center needs Child Care Counts to remain open. I have devoted almost 30 years of my life to this field and have always been proud and passionate about this important work, but for the first time I am scared and sad for what I see ahead. How can we value our children so little? How can we not be concerned about lack of childcare and what it means for our economy? How can we not worry about the impact substandard and perhaps even unsafe care could have on this future generation? Please, please, help our industry before it is too late. During the pandemic we were touted as "heroes", "the workforce behind the workforce", yet a few short months later we are being dismissed and called dramatic. I assure you this is NOT a false cry for help. This is our last cry to save a broken system before it too late and it collapses. If not for the sake of my center and my amazing staff who deserve to be compensated for their skills and education, then for the sake of our babies and children who deserve to be safe, nurtured and given opportunities to reach their full potential, or for the sake of families waiting months and even years for an opening, or for the sake of our entire community whose businesses rely on us so their employees can come to work. Please, do not ignore the facts. We are problem solvers who have shouldered this broken system on our backs with pitiful wages and lack of respect for decades, and we continuously found creative ways to make it work because we knew the importance of early education. But love and passion and a desire to do the right thing is no longer enough. We need help. We need funding through Child Care Counts. And we need others to educate themselves and fight this fight with us.

(54914) Personally I have been able to stay on the field without the childcare counts bonuses that I receive I am not sure that I will be able to financially stay as overall inflation would not make my wage worth staying.

(54915) Without the Child Care Counts we would most likely not have the staff we have. Being able to give them extra income has been so helpful in maintaining staff members. It is difficult for staff to live off the wages childcare staff typically receive so having the extra is nice. Childcare is so important and the staff work so hard to create a safe and fun learning environment for the children and it is sad that the childcare field is struggling so much. It is impossible to raise the tuition prices high enough to be able to pay the staff what they deserve and still make childcare affordable for the families.

(54929) The funds help with the equipment that is needed to help provide quality care

(54449) Our program makes very little money during the school year and it is nearly impossible to find someone who only wants to work the three hours needed after school. Therefore we have to find other hours for them during the school day. These funds help offset that hardship and help us care for as many children as possible.

(54929) I cannot decrease my staff's wages. They are already making poverty level salaries. I will have no choice but to increase tuition up to \$15/day

(54929) Childcare counts help off set some of the low wages and lack of benefits

(54935) We are finally able to pay our staff and our bills and make improvements to our facility. Without these funds I do not see how we could possibly remain open. Our parents already pay as much as they can and still make it feasible for them to work. Our community has a huge shortage in childcare programs and childcare staff. Without the funds that we use to give raises and monthly bonuses to our staff we will not be able to maintain our staff for our program to continue. Selling my program is my only option but finding a buyer to take on the business with out being able to make a profit will be a challenge.

(54935) I have been able to retain quality staff by paying bonuses. I have also been able to improve the facility using these funds.

(54935) Since the child care counts started we are able to retain staff and increase our trainings.

(54935) We were able to increase our teacher's wages so they are able to have an income that is more closely appropriate for the important job they are doing every day. We also are able to offer bonus incentives each quarter to promote retention within our staffing.

(54935) Without the funding we would have had to reduce our enrollment and would have lost several of our teachers. They can not survive on what we are able to pay them without the CCC money. My own staff couldn't afford to send their children to our program. We are already and underpaid and underappreciated occupation, this will just drive a nail into the proverbial coffin for many centers and family programs.

(54942) This has been a saving grace for us with staff retention and supplies to keep us a float and competitive wages

(54942) This has allowed me to stay competitive to hire to continue my Program

(54950) We are in a rural setting. Both parents need to work and thus depend on quality childcare. We have used our funding to increase wages by almost 50% and are still unable to compete in the job market for staff. If funding is discontinued, we will have to raise fees to stay open. Raising fees for parents who are already financially struggling will be detrimental to not only our program, but the whole community.

(54952) The Counts equates to 19% of our revenue. We have had to increase some wages 30% to keep staff and offer those higher wages in attempt to get new staff. Families would not be able to absorb us raising our rates 20%. After 12 years of struggling with finding and paying staff the highest wage possible and without Counts and some government assistance, we have lost our passion for this industry and realize that we cannot be affordable to families and pay high wages at the same time. We would have to close.

(54952) This money has help with keeping staff.

(53218) Our teachers and teaching assistants work very hard for very little unfortunately, we were hiring teaching assistants at a rate of 11.40 to 12.00 an hour (depending upon experience) but with the CCC money we added an additional \$5 an hour to that making it 16.40 to 17. Our teachers are typically hired at 16.50 to 23.00 an hour based upon training and experience but with the CCC money we again added \$5 an hour making it 21.50 to 28.00. I want to be able to pay my teachers a livable wage so they can afford to pay their bills/rent/food/expenses to survive day to day. We have been able to add a stipend of \$5 an hour for every hour worked onto the pay of each employee since the CCC money was awarded and staff have been very appreciative. Especially after COVID when times were challenging. Our staff have been budgeting on this money for the past year and a half, we are afraid we will loose even more staff if/when funding gets cut and that may make it so we can not serve the children and families we are funded to serve. As a Head Start program, we have high standards to meet and it is VERY challenging to find quality staff when we do not have the money to compensate for their skills they have to share with our agency.

(54952) We are a smaller center that helps low income families be able to work and support their family. With the funds, we have been able to increase staff wages to retain them without raising our rates. If the funds go away, we will need to increase our rates in order to keep the staff we have.

(54963) Teachers have shared that without this additional income, they would not be able to afford groceries and would have to look for employment with higher pay.

(54961) Staff appreciate the monthly bonuses.

(54961) Without the funding, we will have to turn families away. Parents on our wait list cry when we tell them we have no openings for their child. They say that they will have to quit their jobs.

(54963) It's been a struggle as a small facility who basically breaks even, the families and community love us and I just hope we can continue this for years to come.

(54963) I honestly don't know if we will be able to stay open if we don't have the Child Care Counts money. It is hard enough with having to pay what we do to keep the teachers we have.

(54970) This has been able to give our staff some bonuses and extra things, such as lunches or more things they request for their classroom. We've been able to get some upkeep done that might have taken longer if we didn't have the help, such as new carpet and some light repairs.

(54981) I have used child care counts to give my staff a higher wage. I have excellent, qualified, educated staff who deserve to make a living doing the important work of educating young children. If I didn't raise wages, I would have lost my staff and been forced to close, forcing 65 children to be without care. I will have to raise my tuition in 2024 if we lose Child Care Counts Funding which may make our services unaffordable for a large percentage of my families.

(54981) Our center has been closed for a year due to unavailability of staff - we've finally gotten staff hired and are reopening in September - we will rely on these payments again as soon as we open as a supplement to our tuitions. We will not raise tuitions after we reopen.

(54983) Child care counts has been great to buy new toys and supplies for our program. Without this we would have to buy used or not have as much of a variety of supplies for the center.

(54986) We need to find a way to allow those that have a passion for child care to be able to make a livable wage as a child care teacher. Currently, we are not able to draw staff to this field that have the heart necessary to be those special caregivers children NEED!

(53566) In addition to increasing tuition, benefit packages like insurance, retirement and PTO would have to stop if the child care counts program ends.

(54986) We are full with children, but we have just enough staff, which makes us able to have enough money to keep going. The extra money from child care counts has been used to make updates to our center, give staff bonuses throughout the year and give tuition credits to parents. If we don't have the money we could make it OK, but there would be nothing extra to reward our awesome staff, and wages would not be increased. This money helps us keep the staff we have and help the families we have. We had a family who had a dad that became very ill and was hospitalized for a month. We were able to pay their tuition for that time and a couple weeks after. These are all things that help us and our families out. We love being able to do these things.

(54982) An inhouse staff survey showed that a majority of employees would look for different employment if the funding were to end, leaving us to close.

(54428) We were struggling to find teachers as we all know the pay isn't high in childcare. It got to the point that we had to close on Fridays to cover shifts and keep our staff from working mandatory overtime and risk burnout and departure from the centers. Since the grants we have been able to increase our wages by almost 4.00 an hour to be competitive with local fast food restaurants. If the grants end, we will need to increase our rates by 40-50 dollars a week to cover the increased wages. This will be a hardship for many parents and ultimately could be the end of the center as parents may decide to stay home and only have a one parent income.

