



The Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association (WCCAA) is the voice of child care administrators and owners, the people who run child care centers day in and day out across Wisconsin. Long before COVID-19, WCCAA was proud to advocate for these heroes and those who work with them on the front lines of our Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce. Our pride has only grown as we have dealt with the pandemic. But we are struggling. Some centers have been forced to shut their doors permanently.

WCCAA thanks the policymakers who have stepped up to help ECE in recent months. The reality is we desperately need more assistance and support if we are going to continue to provide the high-quality care and education that the people of Wisconsin have come to expect from our industry.

### **WCCAA Priorities for the 2021-23 State Budget**

#### **WCCAA Supports WECA's Infant Toddler Proposal with Funding Targeted to Staff**

WCCAA commends the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) for building a strong coalition to support the WECA Infant Toddler proposal. WCCAA is particularly pleased that the proposal would direct funding to early child care and early education staff needs. It will:

- Create an infant toddler stabilization fund that is targeted at programs operating below full capacity: Cost-\$30 million annually.
- Expand the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy for low income parents: ◦ Increase program eligibility to 200% of the Federal Poverty Limit to help working parents stay in the workforce: Cost-\$6.4 million annually.
- Increase subsidy reimbursement rate for infant and toddler care, which is the most expensive age group in care: Cost-\$13.7 million annually.
- Create a pilot program in high need areas of the state where slots for 50 infant and toddler classrooms would be reimbursed at the actual cost of care: Cost-\$9.9 million annually.
- Make it clear that funding under the plan is designed to be used for staffing, which is the biggest challenge currently confronting child care and early education in the state.

#### **The Importance of Investing in the ECE Workforce**

A long-term financial investment in the ECE Workforce will help retain staff, many of whom hold degrees (associate and/or bachelor's), leading to lower costs, making care affordable families; stabilize and expand programs; and increase Accessibility to high-quality child care slots for families who desperately need them.

#### **Regulatory Flexibility**

ECE programs across the state are seriously struggling under the far-reaching, and often duplicative, regulations tied to licensing and YoungStar. We need relief. We are pleased that DCF has proposed some changes for YoungStar. We look forward to working with DCF on these changes and advocating for additional relief.

#### **More Funding for Wisconsin Shares**

It is important for the state to continue to increase Wisconsin Shares rates to a competitive level. Two years ago, in his proposed 2019-21 state budget, Governor Evers provided \$47 million in federal funding for the Wisconsin Shares program to get Shares rates to the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the market. The Legislature cut this funding by \$23 million, still providing a \$24 million increase. This was on top of \$60 million for cost-to-continue.