



MARK MILLER
WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

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Representative Joan Ballweg
210 North
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Representative Ballweg,

Thank you for co-chairing the Early Childhood Brain Development Symposium in response to the powerful Family Impact Seminar on the same subject. The symposium format proved to be less effective for recommending actionable policy initiatives than the study committee format that includes active participation outside of legislators.

Nevertheless, committee members learned a great deal about existing policy in Wisconsin and initiatives in other states. I hope the committee will convene to endorse actionable policy recommendations that will provide significant opportunity to reduce child abuse and neglect and enhance opportunities for achieving the benefits of creating and strengthening early childhood brain development policy.

The committee needs to make substantive recommendations on policies with the best opportunity to achieve substantial benefits.

Many of the recommendations gleaned from committee members and summarized in Legislative Council Memo No 1 are beneficial, but I recommend focusing on those recommendations that will most directly impact early childhood brain development. This list consolidates some of the recommendations in Memo 1 that were similar. It also re-phrases some of the recommendations into actionable format.

Collecting data as the basis for assessing effectiveness of existing efforts is a primary responsibility of government and I support those recommendations that call for more data collection. In addition to the recommendations from Memo 1, I think will be most beneficial are (in the same general sequential order as listed in the memo):

1. Implement financial incentives to encourage parents to choose 4 and 5 star early childhood education centers.
2. Support all the recommendations for improving child care subsidy system.
 - a. Provide for greater subsidy stability for participants that avoids large changes in copayments or subsidy through the course of a program year.
 - b. Increase reimbursement rates for top tier providers.
 - c. Pay providers on the basis of enrollment rather than on the basis of attendance with safeguards to reduce incentive to game the system.



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- d. Create a pre-school nutrition program for all Wisconsin Shares providers.
3. Support the following recommendations for early childhood education:
 - a. Provide tuition supplement for top tier providers.
 - b. Create an infant and toddler quality grant program.
 - c. Build executive functioning skills into early childhood programs.
 - d. Establish a public-private funding board.
 - e. Expand funding for TEACH and REWARD.
4. Direct DPI to deploy a program to educate school district personnel, early childhood learning centers, and others in the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and resiliency.
5. Create a state-wide public health nurse home visitation program for families with newborns.
6. Make the state the insurer of last resort for medical care for pregnant women, mothers of one-year olds, and infants under two.
7. Create and fund a grant program to council divorcing parents.
8. Require a Trauma Informed Care (TIC) curriculum as part of the professional licensing for professions dealing with children.
9. Direct LAB to update its 2008 audit of child welfare services.

These recommendations are those I believe have the best opportunity for enhancing brain development in Wisconsin preschoolers. They are selected without consideration of cost. The legislature can make the determination whether to invest in these programs, but this committee should identify those policies with the greatest possibility for success in early childhood brain development. At the Family Impact Seminar, Art Rolnick, formerly of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, declared that public investment in early childhood brain development is the best investment we can make.

Our committee can help identify the best policies.

Sincerely,

Mark Miller
State Senator