

Committee Name:
Joint Committee on Finance – Budget Hearings (JCF_BH)

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Pre–School

April 15, 1999

Dear Governors Committee,

Hi. I'm Madeline Oleksy and I'm in 6th grade at O'Keeffe Middle School here in Madison.

I think it's great that Governor Thompson wants to grant this money to child care. I'm very into these issues and I think that it's good for children to have great child care teachers to help improve their education.

I was in child care when I was a kid and it had great teachers. I think it's hard to be a child care teacher and take care of lots of kids because when they are little they are hard to take care of. Like they don't always want to share and that's an important thing to learn but it can't be learned without a good teacher showing them. You can't just say "no! no! no!" to little kids. You have to show them what's right and wrong.

When children are very young, that's when they learn to respect each other and themselves and we should take advantage of this opportunity. They should also learn how to solve their problems with words and not by hitting or biting. This is really important because in real life, like in middle school, you have to be able to talk things out and not get into fights. Middle schools should not be dangerous places and by having good child care teachers teach little kids this stuff, everyone will be safer all their lives.

It's great that there will be more money for teachers. If you really care about the future, it's important to help take care of the important teachers who take care of the kids.

April 15, 1999

Governor Thompson, Joint Finance Committee and all Members,

My name is Dianna M. Cole. I am from Iowa County, a small village called Avoca. I have brought with me, our newly elected Village President, Janet Perkins.

I have come here today to VOICE my opinion on an issue that I find very IMPORTANT, DAYCARE!" My concerns are Grant money for start-up of new daycares, and for the bettering of centers all ready in service. Such as Before and After school care.

We are in desperate need of QUALITY group daycare centers, especially in my area in Iowa County.

A quality center should provide FULL SERVICE CARE and have the childrens' best interest covered, as well as all the overhead costs, but yet be able to keep the rates down so parents can afford to use the service!!

I feel it is very important to set aside some monies to distribute grants. The start up costs are phenominal, mostly due to the regulations of the state, but all very much understood for the best quality care for our children.

If we are to get more centers up and running, and better the ones all ready in service, and yet keep it affordable for the parents, **YOU NEED TO HELP!!!!!!!!!!!!**

I would also like to make a couple of brief suggestions. May be it would be possible for you to make more information available on other monies that might be out there or something on the lines of the programs that you help fund like "Habitat for Humanity" and such, and instead of building homes, build daycare centers. Getting people to lend a hand is as easy as the asking.

Please consider my opinion on this matter, as I am in the process of opening a group daycare facility, and came here today with nowhere ^{else} to turn. I have been furiously working on this issue since mid December and am getting nowhere.

or what about w-2 reinvestment money. It's there let's find a use for it.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to come here and voice my opinion. I hope it matters, and I surely hope I have been

HEARD!!!! I've had to leave before I was able to speak, but would really appreciate you reading this.

Dianna Cole

Dianna Cole
P.O. Box 213

Avoca, WI. 53506
608-532-6854



WECA

*Wisconsin
Early
Childhood
Association*

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608-240-9880
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To: Members of Joint Finance Committee
From: Mary Babula, Program Director of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
April 15, 1999

I am here to speak to you today as program director of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, on behalf of the thousands of child care providers who are working today and every day to take care of our children, our most precious resource. They are an essential contributor to the success of welfare reform. If parents know their children are safe and well-cared for, they can be more reliable and productive employees.

I am also speaking as co-chair of the Wisconsin Women's Network Child Care Task Force, which represents thousands of child care consumers, child care providers, and others dedicated to helping improve the condition of women and children.

I wish to indicate our support for many of the child care and early education items Governor Thompson has presented to you in his biennial budget which will help make stable child care more affordable, and improve the child care delivery system in Wisconsin.

Since Wisconsin finds itself in a position of having more than \$70 million in federal funds which were budgeted for child care but not spent in the current biennium, we are pleased that Governor Thompson has proposed spending some of those funds to help make child care more affordable to more families. In addition, the initiatives to improve the quality and availability of child care and early childhood education programs are a wise investment of those federal funds.

Changes in Eligibility for Child Care Subsidy

We support these proposals made by Governor Thompson:

1. establish eligibility for parents with disabled children ages 13-18
2. eliminate the family asset test as an eligibility requirement for child care subsidies
3. extend eligibility to income-eligible parents who are pursuing basic education or training including high school equivalency courses and English as a Second Language courses
4. adjust the income test to reflect net income rather than gross income, for farm and self-employment income

5. no longer count child support payments as income in determining eligibility
6. reduce the requirement for attachment to the workforce in order to qualify for child care while attending school

These changes would make it easier for families to apply for and qualify for a small subsidy to help them meet their child care costs to allow them to work and support their families. These changes also recognize that children with disabilities and special needs are often incapable of being left alone after school, and would remedy an unsafe condition many parents have been forced to put their children in after school, when they received no support to help pay for child care for a disabled child over 12 years of age. These changes will make the child care program more accessible for families who need our help so they can work.

Child Care Infrastructure Development and Support: Initiatives to Improve the Quality and Availability of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Programs:

We are also pleased to see the funds Governor Thompson is proposing to devote funds to improving the quality and availability of child care services in Wisconsin including:

1. \$10 million to develop state-of-the art Early Childhood Excellence Initiative, which we believe should involve collaboration between child care, Head Start and schools
2. \$3.5 million for a child care scholarship and training program modeled after North Carolina's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Program
3. \$8.8 million for grants to improve the availability and quality of child care programs statewide, based on local needs, including subsidies to programs serving low-income children and establishing back-up care for sick children, which would be administered by child care resource and referral agencies
4. \$3.2 million in loan guarantees and loan subsidies through WHEDA for facilities
5. additional \$9.9 million to expand Head Start programs to full day and/or to serve children under age 4
6. \$20 million for Community Youth Grants which could support after-school programs for children statewide
7. increasing the base funding to Child Care Resource and Referral centers, to help parents find and select child care, help new programs get started, and support existing providers
8. on-going funding of \$580,000 to the Safe Child Care program, for on-site inspections, technical assistance and training for county-certified family child care providers
9. maintaining the DHFS budget for child care licensing, by replacing budget cuts in the Social Services Block Grant with Child Care Development Fund or TANF funds to cover licensing positions.

We look forward to working with staff in the Department of Workforce Development to fit all of these new initiatives together to support an improved child care infrastructure system in Wisconsin. We are very excited that this much money could be devoted to such endeavors, and we urge your support of the Governor's proposals.

Teacher Education

I want to speak about the initiatives to improve the education levels of child care providers. We have a great deal of information now about the importance of supporting each child's development in the first three years of life, since that is the time when the brain is developing most fully, and the greatest harm to a child's life time potential can happen if the child's development is not fully supported during those years.

That means it is important for parents to have the resources they need to help them help their children grow and develop fully (good nutrition, preventive health care, a safe home, etc.) That also means it is important for knowledgeable child care professionals to provide good care for children while their parents are working. While being a parent may seem like a "natural activity" to many, caring for and educating other people's children, especially in a group with several children and several sets of parents to work with, does require specialized training.

We also know that the child care industry is suffering. At a time when the overall Wisconsin economy is booming, the child care industry is experiencing a crisis. Child care remains a low paying profession, because parents are primarily responsible for covering the costs of child care. These are typically parents who are at the early stages of their careers, earning lower incomes than they will when their children are cared for and educated in our public education system, or when they are paying for college costs. Child teaching staff earn on average less than \$12,000/year, and entry level assistants earn an average of 10,000 for their full time work. Family child care providers who typically work more than 50 hours a week, earn less than \$10,000 when their business expenses are subtracted from their income. Child care workers, especially those with a family, live in poverty and qualify for benefits such as child care and food stamps. Even though child care is essential for our economy, it is not a job that helps the workers move out of poverty.

Because there are so many jobs available, and because child care is not only a low paying profession but puts high demands on the employee in terms of the work and the additional preparation required to do the job right, many people are opting to take easier jobs which pay them higher wages, such as discount stores and fast food restaurants.

Governor Thompson is proposing, and we support, an exciting program which would use some unspent federal child care funds to provide scholarships for child care administrators and teachers and family child care providers to earn a technical college or college degree. The person who receives the scholarship would make a commitment to stay with their child care program one year for each year of scholarship received. The child care program would make a commitment to provide a bonus or pay raise to the staff person who has improved his or her educational level, and the state funds would enhance that with a bonus as well. This would provide a good step to help child care professionals receive the education they need to provide a good program for

children, and at the same time, make those professionals feel that their work is valued because they will be better compensated.

This program, which is known as T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood--Teacher Education and Compensation Helps would contribute to improved quality in our child care system by creating better educated teachers, who can provide a more appropriate program for children. The teachers will be committed to staying with their programs, thereby reducing staff turnover. The bonuses that child care staff and providers receive through this program will provide additional incentive for them to stay in the field. Children, parents, employers, and all of us are the ultimate beneficiaries of such a supportive program. We urge you to support Governor Thompson's proposal to set aside \$3.5 million for this initiative over the biennium.

Lowering Co-payments

We are pleased that Governor Thompson heard the concerns of parents and child care providers, that child care co-payments under W-2 are too high for some parents, so he is proposing to lower co-payments. We are asking that you amend the Governor's proposal to reduce co-payments even lower, to a maximum of 10% of an eligible family's income.

This would help the poorest families in our economy get off to a good start in their working careers. They would have a manageable child care co-payment, the level recommended by the federal government and economists who study what a family needs to earn and can afford to pay for such essentials as housing, health care, food, and child care. As the family's income rises, they are more able to afford larger child care payments. We shouldn't place too great a burden on families at the lowest income levels, just so they don't have to experience a jump in child care costs when they earn so much that they are no longer eligible for a subsidy. At that point, they have more resources to make those payments.

Raising Eligibility Levels

We are also pleased that Governor Thompson heard the concerns of parents and employers, that we should raise the income level for child care eligibility, so more low income working families can receive a child care subsidy as they move toward self-sufficiency.

We are asking that you amend the Governor's budget proposal to raise that level even higher, to 85% of the state's median income, which would be \$35,400 for a family of three. This is the level allowed by federal law. At this income level, families are much more able to pay their full child care bill, and since the child care co-payments are set on a sliding scale, as family's income rises their child care costs rise, so people nearing 85% of the median income pay most of their child care costs. Child care would represent between 11% and 16% of a family's income at that level. They would also be eligible for a dependent care tax credit.

Amendments to the budget

Wisconsin Early Childhood Association and the Wisconsin Women's Network Child Care Task Force would like to ask you to amend the budget in the following ways.

1. Restore Wisconsin's state commitment to funding child care by restoring the \$39 million in GPR funds which have been removed from this budget proposal. These funds are essential to help families pay for child care. They could be used to raise eligibility and lower copayments as we are proposing. In addition, we feel it a dangerous move to rely only on federal funds to support our child care delivery system, since we have much less control over that level of funding. If federal child care funds are cut, and GPR funds have already been diverted to other uses, we will not be able to sustain our child care system in Wisconsin, and welfare reform will fall apart.

We also want to remind you that investing in good child care is a wise investment which has been proven to cut the costs of special education services and prisons later in a person's life. Think of investing these funds now in child care, so that in five, ten and twenty years you will have a generation prepared to work productively and care for themselves and their families, and we will have much lower costs for special education and prisons.

2. We would like to see the W-2 requirements changed so a parent can choose to stay home with her baby for the first twelve months, (12 months over the parent's life time). We are proposing that because these are critical months for bonding between a parent and child, because infant care is extremely expensive to provide and therefore very difficult to locate, and because low income parents earn so little in their jobs that they will be paying most of their income for child care. If the goal is to help parents become self-sufficient and well able to care for their baby, we would support parent education programs during these months, with parents having the option of working part time, full time, or caring for their baby. This would mirror our society as a whole, where half of the women who have babies do not go back to work in the first year, and of those who do go back to work, half of them only work part time.

3. We would like to see a student loan forgiveness program established, where people who earn a degree in early childhood education and then go to work in child care or Head Start, can have up to \$1000 per year forgiven on their student loans, and if they stay in child care or Head Start for 5 years, then a total of \$5,000 would be forgiven. The estimated cost of this program over the biennium is \$100,000. This would be a wise state investment, to encourage qualified teachers to work with young children, giving them the start they need to succeed in life.

4. We would like to see a Wisconsin Dependent Care Tax Credit instituted so that parents who are eligible for a federal dependent care tax credit to help them pay for their costs to care for a child or dependent elderly or disabled person, would be eligible for a Wisconsin credit equal to 50% of the federal credit. That would provide a tax cut to working families of a maximum of \$360 for one child/adult and a maximum of \$720 for more than one child/adult. The amount of the credit is on a sliding scale, with lower income families receiving a higher credit. The formula would allow this tax credit to fit in with and complement the child care subsidy program Wisconsin Shares (W-2 child care). This program would cost Wisconsin \$16.7 million in lost taxes, and could be paid for through the \$39 million in GPR which we are asking to be restored.

5. We oppose the recommendation to put W-2 agencies in Milwaukee in charge of the entire child care program. We believe Milwaukee County is more publicly accountable, and should be held to the program requirements. However, with the mobility of the poverty-level population in

Milwaukee, there are currently approximately 1000 transfers per month between the W-2 agencies. If that were the case in child care, this would be a nightmare for child care providers trying to be regulated and then paid for their services. Milwaukee County should retain this responsibility.

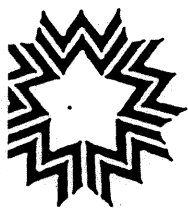
Public Education

We also want to indicate our support for proposals which would provide full funding for four year old kindergarten program, with the provision that public schools could contract to provide those services in child care or Head Start programs, so the children can get a full day program while their parents work, with qualified teachers.

We support the SAGE program, to reduce class sizes for young elementary school children, especially those who are disadvantaged due to the stresses of growing up in poverty.

We also support expanding the school nutrition program to provide more breakfasts and milk in schools. Many low income children rely on the meals they receive at school to provide their primary nutrition each day. We know that good nutrition is essential to healthy growth and maximum brain development in young children. This would be a wise investment of tax dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.



WISCONSIN
WOMEN'S
network

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• Support Compassionate Child Care •
Child Care Task Force--Wisconsin Women's Network
Legislative Agenda 1999

Contacts: Mary Babula, Co-Chair, 608-240-9880
Kathy Keifer, Co-Chair, 414-453-0508

The CHILD CARE TASK FORCE proposes legislative steps to:

- Ensure safe, healthy and quality child care for Wisconsin families who need it.
- Increase benefits for the child care work force that will stabilize, sustain and promote overall quality within the child care system.
- Build and improve access to child care benefits that support the capacity of parents to work and raise their children.

The CHILD CARE TASK FORCE promotes the following legislative initiatives:

1. FOR WORKING FAMILIES...

- Reduce co-payments for low income parents receiving a state child care subsidy to no more than 10% of a family's income.
- Increase eligibility for a child care subsidy to 85% of the state's median income, as is allowed by Federal law.
- Raise the age limit for child care services for families with children with special needs to 18.
- Allow eligible families to use the child care benefits under "Wisconsin Shares" (formerly W-2 child care) for education/training programs.
- Allow parents with children under 12 months voluntary participation in work or training in the W-2 program.

- Restore the state tax credit that allows for a percentage of the Federal Dependent Care Tax Credit to be a state tax credit for working families. (A tax cut for working families.)

2. FOR A QUALITY CHILD CARE WORK FORCE...

- Establish an initiative to provide scholarships for the child care work force to get additional training. Include a mechanism that will provide the child care work force with wage supplements aimed at reducing child care staff turnover, and encouraging higher levels of staff training. (\$3.5 million for the biennium.)
- Restore the training requirements for all certified providers, and increase the minimum requirement for training in child development for providers receiving public child care funds to 20 hours.
- Institute a program for loan forgiveness for higher education for an early childhood credential or degree that supports staff longevity in the field.
- Target health care reform initiatives for the child care work force to provide for access to health insurance through a pool for small child care businesses, and subsidize the cost of insurance for child care programs.

3. FOR AN IMPROVED EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM...

- Earmark and use in the 1999 fiscal year, all dollars left in last year's budget for child care. Use the surplus to reduce child care co-payments and to raise the income threshold for child care eligibility. Continue to earmark unspent child care funds to be spent in the next fiscal year for child care purposes. Do not eliminate GPR from child care base funding.
- Mandate that the Office of Child Care develop a comprehensive plan to:
 - coordinate local and statewide efforts to maximize early care and education dollars for all families.
 - strengthen and stabilize the child care workforce through training and improved wages.
 - ensure that state and federal resources for child care and early education for low income families are protected.
- Create Early Childhood Councils in each county to provide "review and comment" on county expenditures for early childhood programs, ease of parent access to these programs and coordination of care and education services.
- Create state tax credits for employers who provide any of a range of child care benefits to employees or the community.

DATE: 3/1/99

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS OF EXCELLENCE

What is the ideal environment we adults can create for children living in Wisconsin who are aged three to five years old? Why do we need to do more for them than is already being done? Who will be responsible for carrying out this vision?

The ideal environment for early learners will provide for exploration, language stimulation, exercise, space and superior teachers. Children learn through "hands-on" exploration of materials, games, toys or found objects. Contrary to computer game manufacturers' claims, children need to touch, to drop, to mesh, to pull apart, to attach, to copy, to manipulate and they need to do it over and over again in order to truly comprehend such concepts as heavy, square, round, light, sticky, hard, soft, pointed, slick, rough, triangle, back, front, corner, and so on. The ideal environment, in addition to providing for exploration, must provide windows which provide natural light. Besides being healthier for growing brains than fluorescent light, natural light can be a source of science instruction. Tiny seedlings will grow in window sills. Weather phenomena can be observed and discussed. Windows are essential. An ideal environment will offer a multitude of surfaces. For cozy circle times, a carpet is a must. For messy art and exploratory work, a scrubbable vinyl floor surface is necessary. For quiet times, soft cushions relax little bodies. For private times, a loft to climb to is great. For riding and running, an large unencumbered space is required. Finally, an ideal environment will extend outdoors. A variety of climbing and swinging equipment is a must. Wood chips piled beneath provides a soft cushion to tumble onto. Sizable grassy areas provide runners a chance to let loose. A small area in which to garden and search for creatures can present innumerable science lessons. Clearly, an ordinary classroom within an elementary school is unable to provide these requirements and presents as a poor substitute. Yet, in most school districts, the neediest of the 0 to 5 year- old population, those students with developmental delays are placed in classrooms or church basements built for older students. The rest of the 0- 4 year- old population experience a variety of settings from small homes to home day care or franchised day care centers, few of which provide the ideal learning environment. How could they? They are not designed primarily for learning, but for care-giving.

Language stimulation is more necessary now than it was even one generation ago. More children have working parents who are too busy to think out loud in front of growing children. The number of speech and language referrals for therapy in the public schools is sky rocketing. Television does NOT teach a child how to communicate effectively. Computers certainly do not either. Busy day care givers do not have time to ask children to articulate or to repeat their phrases in correct syntax. An ideal environment for early learners should have a speech therapist on staff who will mix speech delayed students with regularly developing talking peers as frequently as several times during each school day. Older students should be carefully mixed in with younger ones to also generate language. Staff must be adequate in number and in training to promote age-appropriate language levels for all students; the at-risk children, the normal children and the developmentally delayed.

Growing children need exercise. Movement is the foundation of all learning. A growing number of early childhood educators realize the valuable effect movement has on a child's ability to learn, to concentrate and to function in society. Our governor has read the newest literature on developing brains, too. He is aware of the needs. Once again, busy parents aren't able to provide the movement diet necessary for neural transmissions to fully develop in the brains of their children. Some children will seek the swinging, hanging upside down, wheelbarrow walking and jumping that they need. Some children only need the "normal" amount of activity parents can provide. Many children need more. They need daily, structured movement to insure that they don't become too restless in grade school. Attention deficit-type behaviors may result from lack of daily large body movement. Socially unacceptable behaviors also arise from lack of desensitizing movement lessons. Years ago, farm children got all the movement their bodies required. Suburban and city children, sitting in front of a monitor or sitting on a bench waiting a turn to swing at a ball or do their front roll up do not receive this sensory diet of necessary movement. Specially trained occupational therapists can work with early childhood teachers to provide a large preschool population with appropriate movement and sensory integration.

Cognitive instruction can be given across many settings. Instructional games provide children with the materials to explore and learn from mistakes. Computer games teach vocabulary and also reinforce correct answers. One-on-one instruction is very valuable. The best early learning center would provide children with all three means of learning: self-correcting games and materials, computer games and teachers with experience and knowledge of all the channels through which young children acquire information, store that information and generalize it to think abstractly.

The most ideal learning center only has the students for a few hours a day. The remainder of a student's day is still spent with busy parents or day care providers. We are finding more and more parents are not as proficient at parenting as they are at their jobs or hobbies. High schools offer a parenting course which probably instructs 1/20th of a graduating class of seniors. An early learning center must provide parents with resources to read, educational games to borrow and support groups to attend. Parenting classes should be offered each semester, one during the day where parents can interact with their children and simultaneously receive professional pointers. Another class should be offered at night with baby sitting provided. There is more information available now on how developing brains can best be nourished and stimulated. Grandparents can't offer this kind of support or advice because it wasn't known in their day. The early learning center must take the place of neighborhood coffee groups, family gatherings and other settings where young parents used to acquire answers to parenting dilemmas.

Early childhood teachers have limited opportunities to broadcast this kind of information. Fortunately, our governor, Tommy Thompson, has become aware of these very critical pieces of the puzzle of how to raise whole, independent, critically thinking and caring students. These students will be Wisconsin's future. Our hope is that law makers, perhaps in partnership with businesses, can see the way to providing the youngest citizens of the state with the brightest futures.

Submitted by: Doris D. Kimball, Early Childhood Teacher, SWD
P.O. Box 130, Wales, Wisconsin, 53183

UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN
M A D I S O N

April 15, 1999

Joint Finance Committee
C/o Senator Brian Burke
Representative John Guard
Room 316 South
State Capitol Building
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

*"For these are all our children; we will all profit or pay for whatever they become."
James Baldwin*

Dear Representative Guard, Senator Burke and Joint Finance Committee Members;

We are writing this letter of support in regard to Governor Thompson's proposed initiatives related to child care and early childhood education. First and foremost, we thank the governor for taking an active leadership role in the development of initiatives that will help support the children and families of Wisconsin. Ongoing initiatives, such as these proposed, will ensure that Wisconsin sets standards that other states can aspire to.

As a group of early childhood professionals, who between us have over 100 years of combined experience working with children and families, we have seen the field evolve. The current research on brain development and the importance of the early years in a child's development support the emphasis and importance placed on quality and educational experiences for our youngest. We know more than can assist us all in creating and supporting essential programs and services for young children. If we use the information well and make good decisions based on what we know, there's no question that Wisconsin will set the national standard in giving meaning to the rhetoric of valuing children and enabling their success. As one nine year old puts it, "Children should not have to be 'made ready' to learn...they ARE ready to learn!"

The six early childhood education centers located on the UW-Madison campus are charged with the mission of developing and teaching "best practices" to students who have chosen the early childhood profession. Collectively, we support the governor's initiatives because:

- They acknowledge that to have a full workforce, quality child care services, including sick child care, must be developed, maintained and be made accessible for working parents.
- Whereas W-2 families are no longer prevalent on campus, we see a strong focus on employer sponsored initiatives that will support all of Wisconsin's work force.
- We see a strong focus on the development of infant care services. Quality infant care is to date the highest unmet need in this community, with the highest "cost of quality" to those who purchase it. In 1998, there was a 35% increase in people seeking infant care through the county subsidy system, but within a tighter market. Since January 1998, 500

Office of Campus Childcare

child care slots within the region have been lost, with 300 of those in licensed or certified care. Recently, an 18-month-old child died as a result of being left with an inadequate caretaker. Had quality child care been available, this tragedy could have been prevented.

...But, we need help to create and maintain these programs for working parents.

--Training and education are essential for quality. We cannot and must not rely on a child care work force without suitable qualifications. If left on their own to purchase the training needed, the underpaid workforce in this field simply cannot afford it. Your support is needed to ensure that mandatory training and education is available and utilized.

--The proposed increases in child care licensing positions are essential in ensuring safe environments for children.

--Lowering the co-payment for low-income families is good practice. This will help ensure that families will have access to higher quality care. Given a lesser cost, but lower quality option for child care, many families would have no other choice than to opt for the service that is affordable, at the expense of their child(ren).

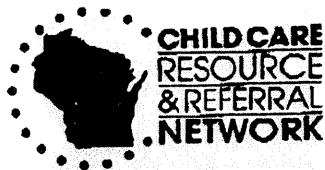
--The TEACH program begins to address the salary and worth wage issues that plague the early childhood field. Over the past three years, turnover in our campus centers has increased dramatically. The fact is that out teachers, who all hold four-year academic degrees minimally, are paid an average hourly rate of \$11.00. They all too often move to the public school system wherein their salaries increase by \$5,000 annually. The responsibilities are the same-- to provide quality early childhood education. Obviously, these moves impact quality and consistency for children and families while presenting inconsistency in the "value" of the service. The bottom line is that to retain quality teachers, salaries must be higher. We encourage tripling the proposed \$3.5 million in order to make TEACH available to all levels of early childhood professionals.

We fully support all proposed initiatives, in entirety. To fund less would compromise the effectiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. We absolutely believe that providing nurturing, stimulating and safe environments for our most vulnerable is non-negotiable for the process of ongoing learning and positive emotional development to occur. We understand that your decisions on budgeting for human needs are difficult. However, this is what great leaders do. They take on challenges and make them better. As a coalition of campus centers, we promise to work hard with you to implement these initiatives for the betterment of Wisconsin's children and families.

Sincerely,

Lynn Edlefson for all
Lynn Edlefson, Campus Child Care Coordinator
Debb Schaub, Director, Eagle's Wing
Joan Ershler, Director, Waisman Early Childhood Program
Amy Welk, Director, Bernie's Place
Jackie Leckwee, Director, Preschool Lab--Linden site
Lucinda Heimer, Director, Preschool Lab--Bethany site
Mary Ellen Post, Director, University Houses Preschool



Making Child Care Work

Wisconsin Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Inc.

www.wisconsinccrr.org

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April 15, 1999

To: Members of Joint Finance Committee
From: Diane Adams, Coordinator, Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network
Re: Testimony from Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies concerning child care items in the Governor's budget

As the Joint Finance Committee examines all tax and spending initiatives for the next biennium, it will be important to focus on the programs that impact most directly on children and families in this state. Nearly 100% of Wisconsin preschool children are enrolled in child care at some point in their lives before they attend public or private school. Child care has become a way of life for working families and a common experience for young children. There is almost no service for consideration in the state budget that is more pervasive than child care.

The Governor's proposed child care budget initiatives represent comprehensive policy thinking on services to the very young. Like other governors with competing interests in their states, Governor Thompson is attempting to accomplish two important goals for child care:

- a) to assure access to quality child care for low-income families and children through a subsidy system and
- b) to shore up the child care quality we have and make it better.

Each of these strands is critical if Wisconsin is to maintain its competitive edge as one of the "top 10 states for child care." The subsidy program is beginning to be understood by more and more working families as a place to turn for help with their third largest budget item: housing, taxes, and child care. This budget proposes to change some of the co-payment stipulations in the original W-2 plan, and make eligibility more in line with other services such as Badger Care. The child care subsidy program will eventually prove to be an important legacy, with now more than 26,000 children receiving a partial payment for child care. All parts of the "Wisconsin Shares" program should integrate to offer smooth access and accountability for families.

The second half of the Governor's child care budget (the quality initiatives) provide the undergirding of the child care system. Specifically, the local community planning for grants that improve both access and quality are increasingly important, as CCR&Rs document the continued need to sustain the existing supply of child care. Given our healthy economy and low unemployment rates, child care programs and providers can, and do, find other positions beside child care and leave the field. Thus, the need for sound community planning is critical, if we are not to lose ground.

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The proposed "Early Childhood Excellence Initiative" if passed by the Legislature, would provide the state with a more solid research base concerning Wisconsin children, which is now lacking. These centers should draw on the expertise of existing quality programs and providers, and use all available talent to assure that the goals of high quality environments are met. Further, these centers should balance rural and urban sites, and guarantee maximum use of the dollars in low population areas.

The focus on compensation and training for child care providers in the proposed budget will help address the need for continuity in children's lives. The CCR&R Network documented a high turnover among child care programs in 1998, and we can assure you that - without more attention paid to such initiatives as the T.E.A.C.H. project - our child care worker supply will continue to dwindle.

Child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies stand ready to help implement these initiatives at the community level. CCR&Rs serve every single county, and work with every single licensed or certified child care program and provider. We recognize that there is a delicate balance in the "three-legged stool" of availability, affordability, and quality. The increased CCR&R allocation as proposed in this budget will help these community-based agencies offer their basic services of parent referrals/consultations, data documentation, and support for the child care system through training and information to new and existing providers. Healthy, safe child care will be enhanced by the funding for more licensing positions and through the Safe Child Care program. Each of these parts of the "Quality/Availability Initiative" will undergird early care and education in the state.

The challenge for the Joint Finance Committee is to accept these innovative child care measures, while assuring there is sufficient federal funding to help support them. Thus far, Congress is in a positive stance toward the states, helping each of them achieve the type of child care necessary for children's healthy development that meets state goals. We encourage you to accept the Governor's budget proposals for child care, knowing that the return on investment is going to be realized only as these children enter the elementary school system fully competent, and as their parents are able to be fully employed - with peace of mind that their children are receiving quality child care.

Thank you very much.

cc: Office of Child Care