

# Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition

## High-Quality Child Care Prepares Children for School Success: Invest \$40 million

### START EARLY

**Astonishing early brain development:** We know that **90%** of brain capacity occurs in the first five years, laying the foundation for academic skills and behavior traits children need to succeed in school and beyond.

**School entry is too late:** We know that children that start behind in school **stay behind**.

### HIGH QUALITY EARLY LEARNING WORKS

**Return on investment:** High-quality early learning leads to lasting benefits, and is particularly effective for children with high needs. Economists estimate **returns on investment of \$4 to \$16 for every dollar invested** by saving costs in special education, child welfare, and criminal justice, and increased income and taxes paid.

**Teachers are the key quality ingredient:** Young children learn primarily through **interactions** with caring adults. Child care is high quality only when teachers are well-trained and reasonably compensated, with low turnover.

### BUILD ON WISCONSIN STRENGTHS

**Framework in place:** Wisconsin has a child care framework with two complimentary programs:

1. **Wisconsin Shares** child care subsidy program that helps low-income working families afford child care (programs receiving Shares payments); and
2. **YoungStar** quality rating and improvement system, focused on improving early learning in child care. A key YoungStar goal is to help children prepare for school.

**Focus:** Focusing on the **46,000 low-income children** with working parents now receiving child care subsidies through Wisconsin Shares makes sense, since these children are at higher risk of school failure.

**Restore the cuts:** Over the last 6 years, we have seen a **\$104 million drop** in annual child care subsidy payments to programs participating in Wisconsin Shares, impeding efforts to build high quality child care and leaving programs struggling to make ends meet. Child care funding in the state budget is mostly from federal sources. A major portion of the federal funds that were moved from child care to other purposes should be restored to the child care budget. Early learning is the key to school success for Wisconsin's children.

### PROPOSAL: INVEST \$40 MILLION IN HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE

Wisconsin should take a bold step to improve the quality of child care services for 46,000 low-income children. An investment of \$40 million per year would partially restore the child care payments cut in recent years, and strengthen the sustainability of quality programs through the Wisconsin Shares program and the YoungStar program. Help our children be ready for school.

## **Early Learning Coalition Members in Support:**

Advocates for Birth to Three Services  
Chris Holmes

Milwaukee Child Care Alliance  
Dave Linsmeier

Supporting Families Together Association  
Jill Hoiting

Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association  
Joan Beck

Wisconsin Early Childhood Association  
Ruth Schmidt

Wisconsin Head Start Association  
Lilly Irvin-Vitela

Celebrate Children Foundation  
Mary Ann Gerrard

Next Door Foundaton  
Carol Keintz

Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health  
Kathie Snitker-Magin

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families  
David Edie

Wisconsin Family Child Care Association  
Xochitl Ortega

