



# Providing all Families with Access to Quality Early Care and Education Opportunities

Making foundational investments in Wisconsin's early care and education system to support families, child care providers, communities, and the economy.

## Supporting Families in Accessing Affordable, Quality Care

Paying for child care is a struggle many Wisconsin parents and caregivers face. It's easy to understand why. The monthly cost of child care is often more than the cost of food, housing, and utilities. For many families in our state, that's a financial hurdle too big to overcome. The Governor's budget proposes several changes to support both Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy recipients and private pay families in accessing quality care. One vital proposal is the expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Credit, providing nearly **\$30 million** in relief to an estimated **107,000 Wisconsinites**.



## Investing in the Early Childhood Workforce and System Infrastructure

The Child Care Counts payment program has served as a lifeline for child care operators, most of which are small businesses serving their local communities. This program offers providers the financial stability they need to keep the lights on, pay their workers competitive wages, and continue to provide high-quality care to kids across the state. The budget provides a foundational investment of **\$340 million** for Child Care Counts throughout the biennium to continue this critical program and help sustain the early care and education system. In addition to supporting the workforce and economy, the budget seeks to enhance early childhood system supports and decrease child care deserts around the state. These investments include the funding of an online child care licensing application that will seek to reduce application timelines; implementation of a **\$10 million** grant program to attract new providers; and increased funding to support recruitment and retention of child care providers in tribal areas.

## Building Thriving Communities and Supporting the Economy

Child care is the work that enables all other work. Without access to quality, affordable care, parents, especially women, are unable to enter or remain in the workforce. This creates an additional strain on communities who are already short on workers. The budget invests **\$22 million** over the biennium to continue the Partner Up! grant program, which connects the business and early care and education communities. Though this innovative program, employers are able to offer attractive benefits to remain competitive in a tight labor market. Parents are also able to access quality care and keep more money in their pocket. Finally, child care providers are able to steady their enrollment numbers and increase their revenue to be closer to the actual cost of providing care. The overall impact of Partner Up! is to keep more people in the workforce and Wisconsin's economy moving forward.

