

Republicans Prove Nothing Good Happens After Midnight

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/childcare-s451.jpg>



Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee have chosen to cut continued childcare funding from the 2023-25 state budget, a shortsighted move that will lessen productivity and hurt working families statewide.

BRUNSWICK, WI - As a father of two adult children, I remember the 2:00 AM feedings when my kids were babies. I wanted nothing more than to just sleep, but I'd stumble out of bed and do what it took to care for the crying baby.

On Sunday we celebrated Fathers' Day, but around 1:00 AM on Thursday last week parents of young kids were probably too groggy to watch Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee gut the Child Care Counts program in the budget. That was the Father's Day gift to Wisconsin families from Republicans.

Child Care Counts was the last lifeline for child care providers to stay open. This one terrible and senseless vote will make a really bad situation for kids go to worse.

The Child Care Counts program was born from a serious problem highlighted by the pandemic. Before COVID-19 hit Wisconsin, child care deserts were already forming. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families classifies a child care desert as an area where there is no licensed child care provider or there are more than three children under the age of five for each

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licensed child care slot.

According to the Center for American Progress, 54% of Wisconsinites live in a child care desert. The problem is most prominent in rural communities. There are 1.3 million people in rural communities that coincide with a child care desert versus only 403,000 people in an urban child care desert.

Like many other things we saw as vulnerabilities, the pandemic turned the child care shortage into a full-blown crisis during the pandemic. Fortunately, our pre-existing child care desert problem was alleviated by the Child Care Counts program during the pandemic. It buoyed our crisis and kept our child care centers afloat. The program ran out of money in April of this year. Now child care providers are trying to make ends meet without the funding or the workers to make it happen.



Many people may think, “Well, I don’t have kids in daycare. Why should it matter to me?” Children’s success and our society’s success hinge on children ages 1-5 getting the care and education they need to thrive later in life. We all do better if our kids do better.

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