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Gov. Evers formally requests Public Hearing as longstanding workforce issues legislation awaits action in the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges.

MADISON— Gov. Tony Evers sent a letter to [State Sen. Dan Feyen \(R-Fond du Lac\)](#) , chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges, formally requesting a public hearing and executive session on [September 2023 Special Session Senate Bill 1](#) , the governor’s comprehensive plan to address Wisconsin’s generational workforce challenges. The governor’s letter to Sen. Feyen is available [here](#) .

Gov. Evers announced in August he would be calling a special session of the Legislature to occur at 12:00 p.m. on Sept. 20, 2023, to address the state’s longstanding workforce challenges by investing in affordable, accessible child care statewide and preventing the child care industry’s looming collapse, expanding paid family leave to ensure most workers have 12 weeks of paid leave, educating and training the state’s future workforce at the University of Wisconsin (UW) and Wisconsin Technical College Systems, and supporting high-need workforce sectors statewide, like the healthcare and education workforces. More information about the governor’s special session plan is available [here](#) .

Republican lawmakers, who have not yet taken action on the governor’s comprehensive workforce plan, gaveled into the governor’s special session on September 20 but have not ‘gaveled out’ of the special session, leaving it open for future consideration and action. The governor’s comprehensive workforce bill, Special Session Senate Bill 1, was referred to the

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Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
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Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges on September 21. Sen. Feyen, who chairs the committee, [pledged](#) to treat the special session legislation “the same as every other bill referred to this committee” and committed to holding a public hearing on the bill. To date, a public hearing has not been scheduled.



“As the chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges, I write to you today regarding September 2023 Special Session Senate Bill 1, my comprehensive plan to address our state’s workforce challenges that I announced in August, which was recently referred to your committee. I urge you to hold a public hearing and executive session on this bill without delay,” wrote Gov. Evers. “Unfortunately, with each day of delay and inaction, the state is seeing the consequences of uncertainty and a lack of investment in this industry through multiple child care closures, throwing working families and their kids into chaos and destabilizing the workforce in our local communities.

“We have a historic opportunity and responsibility to address state needs that have long been neglected—that includes addressing Wisconsin’s longstanding workforce shortages that have plagued our state for generations and that will continue holding employers, families, communities, and our state’s economy back without urgent action.

“I am hopeful you will join me in this important work by holding a public hearing and executive session on my comprehensive workforce plan without delay so we can not only give kids, working families, employers, and child care providers the certainty and stability they need but finally give our state’s workforce the focused attention and action it has long deserved.”

Gov. Evers has made it a priority to address Wisconsin’s workforce challenges, including by investing in efforts that support affordable, accessible child care, like the Child Care Counts Program. To date, Child Care Counts has helped more than 4,440 child care providers keep their doors open, ensuring the employment of 22,000 child care professionals and allowing providers to continue care for more than 113,000 kids. In his 2023-25 biennial budget proposal, Gov. Evers proposed making the Child Care Counts Program permanent with a more than \$340 million investment to continue supporting Wisconsin’s early care and education community, as well as the working families who depend on this care to get to work and put food on their tables.

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Unfortunately, despite the state's historic surplus, Republicans in the Legislature decided against putting any funding toward Child Care Counts, meaning the program is set to end in January 2024. According to a [report](#) from The Century Foundation, without additional continued investments, 2,110 child care programs are projected to close, resulting in over 87,000 children without child care in Wisconsin and the loss of over 4,880 child care jobs. Additionally, the lack of access to child care could potentially cause about half a billion dollars in economic impacts across the state. Through action he took on the biennial budget, Gov. Evers ensured ample state resources are readily available to help stabilize the state's child care industry and address the state's longstanding workforce challenges.

In recent weeks, a [new report](#) released from Forward Analytics highlighted that the average cost for newborn care in Wisconsin was between \$10,400 and \$13,572 annually in 2021. The report also shows that child care costs can consume up to 36 percent of a family's household income for parents under the age of 25 at the median income and 18 percent for parents between 25 and 44 at the median income. For a typical family with parents under 25, child care costs can reach as high as 70 percent of the household's income for two children in care. All told, the report highlights that the cost of child care for two young children in Wisconsin is now more than the average rent or mortgage and exceeds the annual cost of tuition to send two students to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The report suggests that without consistent, ongoing funding through a program such as Child Care Counts, child care will remain understaffed and unaffordable for families in Wisconsin.