



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

children  
& families

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

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May 18, 2007

TO: Joint Finance Committee

FR: Charity Eleson, Executive Director

RE: Budget Papers 891, 892 and 893-Wisconsin Shares and Quality Child Care

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) strongly supports a fully-funded Wisconsin Shares program that ensures low-income working families are able to place their children in child care settings supervised by adults during work hours. WCCF also strongly supports efforts to continue to improve child care quality in the state based on a robust body of research that shows strong academic and social returns for at-risk children if they are cared for in high quality early education and care settings.

#### Wisconsin Shares- Paper #891

The Wisconsin Shares program is a highly effective support that allows low-income working families to work by providing assistance to those families to pay for child care. The program, as currently structured, ensures that all families who are eligible for and need the benefit to work are able to receive it. Imposing waiting lists, modifying the rate and payment structure and reducing income eligibility—as are proposed in the biennial budget bill—would have the effect of substantially reducing the effectiveness of the program to support families' ability to work and put children at risk by forcing families unable to receive the benefit to put children in unsafe, unsupervised settings.

It is essential that children not be put at risk. Further, the state's policies should support families' ability to obtain and retain employment. **To that end, WCCF respectfully requests that you support alternatives to the bill that include A3, B1, B2, and B3.**

#### Improving Quality- Paper #892

This budget proposal includes measures that would assist Wisconsin in making some small steps toward improving the quality of child care throughout the state. The first element of the quality improvement package is to create a quality rating system that would provide parents with information on the quality of licensed child care providers. This information, which is currently not available, would provide parents with information that is crucial in helping make a critical decision on whom would care for their young child while they're at work. It would help Wisconsin to begin to lay the groundwork for system-wide improvement in the quality of child care over time, an effort

that we should be able to reach consensus on since the quality of early care and education has been proven to be a critical component in assisting young children—particularly at-risk children—in preparing to succeed in school. **Based on that, we are asking that you adopt alternative A1 in paper 892.**

Teach and Reward – Paper #893

A critical element of high quality early care and education programs is the quality of the teacher and the quality of the teacher is strongly linked to the level of education that teacher has attained. Wisconsin is rightfully proud of the achievements of its TEACH and REWARD programs, which assist child care teachers in obtaining higher levels of education and, then, rewarding them for that education, thus improving retention. **Based on the good track record that this program has in improving teacher quality and teacher retention, we ask that you adopt B1 in paper 893.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 284-0580, ext. 302.

Thank you.