

“Over the past few months, I have attended several listening sessions, public hearings and have had conversations with community members to discuss what Wisconsinites need most from their state budget. All across my district and the state, I have heard loud and clear that working families are struggling with access to childcare.

“May 8th is a Day without Childcare. Now thankfully, places like New Beginnings Childcare in Eau Claire and other centers across our area have not yet been forced to shut their doors. If they would, our economy would collapse.

“If childcare centers are not open, teachers can’t get to work and schools would shut down. Medical professionals couldn’t get to work and hospitals and clinics would need to lock their doors. Your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, grocery store all would be in danger of closing. It is time our society realizes what a critical part of our economy childcare centers are and starts treating them that way.

“Childcare centers are the intersection of providing early child education, which we know from research is key to raising the next generation to be mentally and physically healthy. But it also provides a place for caregivers to leave their children so that they can go to work. When a child care facility cannot find enough staff, children get turned away, which means parents have to scramble to find alternative forms of child care, or they can't make it to work. Some are forced to leave the workforce entirely. These parents leaving the workforce are causing a major strain on our state's small businesses and economy.

“On this day without child care, we recognize the vital service that our child care providers give to our communities. We need to do everything we can to make sure Wisconsinites can continue to access affordable, quality child care. We need to protect Child Care Counts.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Tony Evers created the Child Care Counts program to stabilize the child care industry and expand access for working families. This program helped over 3,300 child care providers keep their doors open, recruit and retain over 22,000 qualified staff, and continue providing high-quality care for over 113,000 kids statewide. Despite the program’s wide success, its federal funding will soon run out, and it is imperative that our state steps in to protect child care facilities from closure. “