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STATE SENATOR • SENATE DISTRICT 18

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Senator Dassler-Alfheim and DCF Secretary Pertl tour local child care center,
highlight importance of Child Care Stabilization fund**

In celebration of National Provider Appreciation Day, speakers emphasized the vital role that child care providers play in supporting the economy

APPLETON, WI – Today, State Senator Kristin Dassler-Alfheim (D-Appleton) along with Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Jeff Pertl celebrated National Provider Appreciation day by touring Bridges Child Enrichment Center with Executive Director Nicole Seebruck Zellmer. The Senator presented the center with a legislative citation in honor of the district's child care providers, and Executive Director Seebruck Zellmer and Secretary Pertl spoke about the negative impact of the removal of the Child Care Stabilization fund from the 2025-27 state budget. They were joined by parents, Bridges staff, and other community child care providers, including the Director of AASD's 4K program, the Director of UW-Oshkosh's Head Start program, and the Director of the Community Early Learning Center.

"Supporting the child care industry and workforce is essential. We know that child care has an overwhelmingly positive impact on kids' growth, educational outcomes, and overall health and well-being. When communities have access to quality, affordable child care, kids are more prepared for K-12 and parents are allowed to participate in the workforce, bolstering the economy," said Senator Dassler-Alfheim. "This National Provider Appreciation Day, I'm honored to present Bridges Child Enrichment Center with this legislative citation in recognition of their hardworking staff and history of excellence."

Bridges Child Care Center has been a fixture in the Fox Valley for over five decades. Through grants and programs like the Child Care Stabilization fund, Bridges was able to attract and retain staff by offering competitive wages, cover the cost of required trainings, make center improvements to meet quality initiatives, and support teachers and parents managing children with challenging behaviors. Bridges has established unique partnerships with other organizations like United Way Fox Cities, the Appleton Area School District, Lawrence University, and Catalpa Health, enabling them to offer comprehensive and innovative programming to children and families.

Now, rising costs, staff shortages, and funding cuts at the federal and state levels are threatening the center's ability to keep their doors open and continue to provide quality care to the community.

"The Child Care Stabilization fund has been enormously helpful. It's allowed us to keep on experienced, highly trained staff, keep our retention rates high, and maintain low student-to-teacher ratios – but that extra support is gone June 30th. That means we'll be forced to cut staff, limit capacity, or increase tuition just to keep the lights on. We are the essential workforce behind every other workforce, and our teachers, our children, and our families deserve better," said Executive Director Seebruck Zellmer.

“The ripple effects of ending Child Care Stabilization will be felt by not just providers and families, but by employers, the economy, and communities as a whole,” said Secretary Pertl. “Providers have been sounding the alarm for months – 25% say they are likely to close, and 38% expect to raise weekly rates by \$25 or more, adding thousands to families’ household budgets per year. It’s absolutely imperative that significant investments in this essential industry are included in the 2025-27 state budget.”

Funding for the Child Care Stabilization fund, which expires in June, was removed from budget consideration today by the Joint Finance Committee during their first Executive Session. The committee voted party line 10-3 to remove from further consideration the funding as proposed by the Governor ([Item #14, page 99](#)) along with an [additional 611](#) items.

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