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STATE SENATOR

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A Day Without Child Care

Take some time and ask yourself, what would your day look like without child care? Would you be able to work? Would your business lose employees?

This week, we commemorate “A Day Without Child Care;” a day to highlight the need for dignified, worthy wages for our hardworking early childhood educators as well as the need for greater equity and affordability in child care.

Accessible, quality child care isn’t just necessary for our children’s development, it is also a critical part of our economic infrastructure. Child care is a lifeline for many working families as well as Wisconsin businesses who desperately need employees.

In western Wisconsin, we recognize the need to do more. Child care providers and business leaders alike know that if we do not act we will lose child care providers.

Working families must have access to quality, affordable child care. When my kids were young, they went to child care, and every time I dropped them off I knew that they were in good hands. I knew that the providers would take care of them and help them continue to grow and learn.

The people who care for our kids deserve to be paid a fair wage; a wage that reflects the tremendous impact they have on our communities. If we cannot pay our child care providers enough, we will lose them, and then we will lose access to child care itself.

Unfortunately, many parents across our state live in child care deserts where they have no place to send their kids. In some cases they have no access to providers, while others may travel more than thirty minutes one way to access child care before work each day.

Wisconsin’s child care deserts are growing. In Cashton, the community lost their only child care facility, Cradles to Crayons, last year.

Similarly, we have seen the economic challenges of child care grow significantly. Parents cannot afford it, while at the same time it is difficult to pay child care providers for the important work they do.

Despite the challenges we face, child care providers in western Wisconsin are continuing to make a difference. I’m grateful for everything they do to support our communities, because without them we would be in trouble.

That’s why this week we are acknowledging “A Day Without Child Care” and continuing to seek ways to empower child care providers in our region. We have made some important strides. Funding from the Child Care Counts program has kept many child care providers afloat, but we need to continue to push for more. A national report found that \$232 million in parental wages may be lost in Wisconsin without Child Care Counts.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to fix Wisconsin's child care crisis. We need to renew funding for programs that have been proven to work like Child Care Counts, but at the same time we need to support local businesses who are working to expand child care options.

Child care providers are essential for the stability of our society. To our child care providers, know that we need you, and we need more like you.

I firmly believe there is more that unites us than divides us, and that when we work together, we can find ways to make child care more accessible and affordable in our state.

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Senator Brad Pfaff represents the 32nd Senate District, which includes La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, and southern Monroe County.