

**For Immediate Release**

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**New Survey Measures the True Impact of Child Care Counts Funding on Milwaukee Providers**

*Results highlight the challenges and opportunities in the city's child care sector*

**MILWAUKEE, Wis. (June 1, 2022)** – The Milwaukee Succeeds-led Early Childhood Education (ECE) Coalition recently completed a citywide survey of child care providers in order to determine what impact Child Care Counts funding has had on the industry. The new data, which was released in a report titled “[Making Every Dollar Count](#),” demonstrates the critical need for such funding, while also highlighting the concerns that still remain for providers.

Beginning in March of 2020, child care providers in Wisconsin were eligible to receive federal COVID-19 relief dollars via the state’s Child Care Counts program. The funding, which will continue into 2023, was intended to help providers remain open, keep staff employed, and provide quality care to children. As of March 2022, more than \$62 million has been awarded to over 1,300 providers in Milwaukee.

This funding represents a significant public investment into the ECE sector, which faced immense strain during the pandemic and has been struggling with retention and recruitment challenges for years. In order to accurately assess what impact this funding had, the Milwaukee ECE Coalition – comprised of diverse leaders and providers from across the city – electronically surveyed all child care providers in Milwaukee. A total of 507 providers responded, representing 44% of all providers in the city.

“As a Coalition, we had the opportunity to advocate for and inform the Child Care Counts program,” said Daria Hall, ECE director for Milwaukee Succeeds. “Now, thanks to this survey, we have vital information on how those dollars are being used. This data will guide our efforts toward continuous improvement, while informing advocacy for much needed, much deserved investment into the ECE sector.”

When asked what impact the funding had on their business, respondents indicated that it helped them retain staff through an increase in pay or benefits, pay their bills and expenses, afford materials like new curriculum, and ultimately keep their doors open. Approximately 80% of providers used the funding for cleaning and/or classroom supplies, while 75% used it for utilities and 70% for their rent or mortgage. In addition, 6 out of 10 providers indicated that they used the funding to reduce parent fees in an attempt to assist their families financially.

Some providers responded that the funds were enough to cover their core needs, yet others indicated that specific areas of concern still exist. Foremost amongst these were staff compensation/benefits and the recruitment and retention of staff.

“Most child care providers in Milwaukee can only afford to pay their teachers about \$13 an hour, while the starting wage at big box stores currently sits around \$15 an hour,” said Kristin Kappelman, director of research at Milwaukee Succeeds. “So staff compensation and being able to provide additional

benefits, like health insurance or paid time, off, are incredibly important issues for providers – and for the sustainability of the industry.”

Finally, when asked what they would tell decision-makers about the funding, respondents expressed their gratitude for the stability the funding provided in such uncertain times. Not only did the money help keep their businesses open, but it increased the quality of their programming, opening up additional development and training opportunities for staff. Multiple providers also expressed concern for what will happen when the Child Care Counts funding runs out in 2023.

“[Child Care Counts funding] saved us,” one provider noted. “We would have shut our doors and turned away 66 families that all have parents that need to work. However, this is a temporary fix. I need a long-term fix. ... Invest in education. Invest in the children that we are supporting and growing. Invest in the workforce that need their children taken care of.”

For additional results and information on the survey, access the report at [milwaukee.succeeds.org/childcarecounts](https://milwaukee.succeeds.org/childcarecounts).

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#### **About Milwaukee Succeeds**

*Milwaukee Succeeds was launched by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation in 2011 as a way to unite the community around a common goal: bringing about lasting change to the way education works for children in Milwaukee. Milwaukee Succeeds collaborates with local and national partners to enact a common agenda, prioritizing community voice, racial equity, and systems change. Since 2019, their efforts have focused on two key areas of importance: Early Childhood Education and High School Success. To learn more, visit: [milwaukee.succeeds.org](https://milwaukee.succeeds.org)*

#### **About Milwaukee’s ECE Coalition**

*Led by Milwaukee Succeeds, Milwaukee’s ECE Coalition collectively advocates for increased resources and support for the ECE sector. This coalition, comprised of a diverse group of childcare providers, non-profits, philanthropists, and civic leaders, has brought a unified voice to decision-making tables to expand access to quality, affordable childcare for Milwaukee’s Black and Brown families. To learn more, visit: [milwaukee.succeeds.org/ece-coalition](https://milwaukee.succeeds.org/ece-coalition)*