THE CURRENT SITUATION

Child care and preschool are necessities for working families, but the high price of care puts them out of reach for most. Parents are faced with impossible choices and are left weaving together a patchwork of care or making career sacrifices that affect their families’ economic security. Wisconsin needs to increase public investment to make affordable, high-quality child care and preschool a reality for families and providers.

HOW WISCONSIN IS FALLING SHORT

Existing early learning supports are inadequate. Child care subsidies do not cover the cost of high-quality care, and they fail to reach the majority of families in need. State preschool programs are underfunded and rarely provide universal access for 3- and 4-year-olds. The limited revenues available to early learning programs leave the early childhood workforce woefully underpaid and restrict access to high-quality care to only the highest-income families.

OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding the child care subsidy system to cover all low- and middle-income families and providing universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds are two critical steps Wisconsin can take to support working families. Increasing public investment in the early learning system in this way would lead to substantial benefits for children, families, and the broader state economy.
ENDNOTES


5 Center for American Progress, “Child Care Deserts,” available at childcaredeserts.org (last accessed July 2019).


10 Author’s analysis based on Workman and Jessen-Howard, “Understanding the True Cost of Child Care for Infants and Toddlers”; Kids Count Data Center, “Median family income among households with children.”


12 Ibid.


