



# Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

## VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

October 3, 2023

State Sen. Dan Feyen  
Room 306 South  
State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Sen. Feyen:

As the chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges, I write to you today regarding September 2023 Special Session Senate Bill 1, my comprehensive plan to address our state's workforce challenges that I announced in August, which was recently referred to your committee. I urge you to hold a public hearing and executive session on this bill without delay.

As many legislators have both publicly and privately acknowledged, our state has long experienced a shrinking labor pool due to several long-term factors that, coupled with our state's current historically low unemployment and high workforce participation, are causing Wisconsin's small businesses, farmers and producers, hospitals and healthcare sectors, and schools, among other critical employers and industries, to face significant challenges filling available jobs.

This situation is only exacerbated by the increasing lack of accessible, affordable child care across our state for working families. Over the past few months, I've visited more than 30 child care providers, including in your district. I've heard firsthand about the struggles providers are facing to find and retain staff, to provide high-quality care under dire circumstances, and about their waitlists that are already a mile long. Their message has been clear: we must continue the Child Care Counts Program to help providers keep their doors open and lights on and to ensure working parents have high-quality care for their kids.

It is [estimated](#) that without the necessary investments to continue this crucial program, 2,110 child care programs are projected to close across our state. That could result in the loss of over 4,880 child care jobs—leaving more than 87,000 Wisconsin kids without child care, potentially causing about a half billion dollars or more in economic impacts between parents leaving the workforce and reduced employer productivity.

Unfortunately, with each day of delay and inaction, the state is seeing the consequences of uncertainty and a lack of investment in this industry through multiple child care closures, throwing working families and their kids into chaos and destabilizing the workforce in our local communities. For example, recent reporting from [Wisconsin Watch](#) and the [Grant County Herald Independent](#) have highlighted the concerning child care landscape in Lancaster, which lost its second-largest child care provider, Giggles & Wiggles Daycare, at the end of August. Due to the lack of funding and workforce shortages, they could not provide continued care to the 35

enrolled children, resulting in the decision to close their doors. I visited Giggles & Wiggles on August 10, where I met with the owner and the staff who would soon lose their jobs, as well as some of the parents who are now scrambling to find other child care options in a community where there is already a lack of affordable providers.

Importantly, child care is also just one part of my comprehensive plan to address our state's workforce challenges: my plan not only makes critical investments in accessible, affordable child care and preventing the child care industry's looming collapse; it also expands paid family leave, supports further educating and training our future workers at our UW and Wisconsin Technical College System campuses, and bolsters high-need workforce sectors statewide, like our education and healthcare workforces. It is a comprehensive plan that addresses many of the needs that I have heard about—and I am sure you have as well—from Wisconsinites across our state.

I was heartened to see you acknowledge my concerns about these pressing challenges when this bill was referred to your committee, stating, "Some of the issues included in this special session bill need to be addressed sooner rather than later to keep the Wisconsin economy on track." I could not agree more. We have a historic opportunity and responsibility to address state needs that have long been neglected—that includes addressing Wisconsin's longstanding workforce shortages that have plagued our state for generations and that will continue holding employers, families, communities, and our state's economy back without urgent action.

I am hopeful you will join me in this important work by holding a public hearing and executive session on my comprehensive workforce plan without delay so we can not only give kids, working families, employers, and child care providers the certainty and stability they need but finally give our state's workforce the focused attention and action it has long deserved. Together, we can do the right thing for kids and working families and the right thing for Wisconsin, and I look forward to the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges scheduling a public hearing on September 2023 Special Session Senate Bill 1.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Evers  
Governor

cc: Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges