

Dear Secretary Anderson,

The Early Childhood Care and Education Committee (ECCEC) for the City of Madison recently hosted a childcare forum that offered childcare providers across Dane County an opportunity to vocalize their experiences, challenges and concerns with policies and practices impacting their field. In an effort to raise awareness for the providers' concerns presented at the forum, the ECCEC asks the Department of Children and Families to consider the following information related to state programs.

Licensing

Providers find licensing to be inconsistent, particularly concerning reliability across licensors when there is turnover. What an initial regulator advised for facility planning to one provider was not consistent when the newly assigned specialist reviewed the recommendations. At times, enforcement actions are perceived as complicated and punitive.

Quality

Providers are concerned with finding ways to maintain quality programs. YoungStar values education over experience. As a result, education has become a barrier to ensuring quality. Providers emphasize non-credit education should count toward the rating process. Additionally, providers want to see a system for professional development put in place to overcome the issues with retaining high quality staff.

Wisconsin Shares

Overall, providers find Wisconsin Shares challenging. Parents do not understand the reimbursement process. There is confusion between rates, copayments and obligations to pay the difference between the provider's private pay price. Providers find it difficult to educate parents on what they are supposed to pay. Providers have had to raise rates to cover the gap between Wisconsin Shares reimbursement and the actual costs to provide care.

Providers are also challenged by the changes to attendance based authorization policies. Without pay for days when children are sick or on vacation, providers cite financial loss, particularly to family childcare providers. Providers advocate for a return to enrollment based authorizations for family providers and an extension to notices, ensuring providers have sufficient time to make business accommodations before authorization payment levels change.

With issues presented across licensing, quality and Wisconsin Shares, the ECCEC felt the Department could benefit from the information shared at the City of Madison childcare forum. We intend for this information to provide background and context for policy discussion. Please do not hesitate to contact ECCEC with any questions.

Thank you,