

## 2016 Child Care Forum Comments

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I have attached several short papers that explore some ways to look at child care gaps and issues within Madison and Dane County.

Child care within Dane County faces serious economic challenges caused by a high growth economy that is driving up costs. Child Care's challenges while different parallel the challenge of moving families in the county from poverty to self-sufficiency. The attached papers outline some of the core economic issues behind these challenges.

As a committee you are tasked with somehow addressing these complex issues. In doing so I think you need to always keep in mind some key concepts.

First, when started over 40 years ago, the focus of the Early Childhood Division within the city was to develop high quality child care for all of the city's children. From talking to people who were there, the strategy was both child centric but also part of the City's overall economic development strategy. In spite of the attached reports, you have succeeded beyond almost any other area in the nation in providing high quality programs. **This has also played a key role in the strong economic growth of the city and the county.** The latter is often ignored in discussions about the City's child care (and mostly by people who were born here and take it for granted – those of us who are immigrants better appreciate the magnitude of the accomplishment). The role of high quality care in the city and county's economic development however is critical to maintaining the city's economic development and needs to be considered in the strategies that you develop. As the hiring survey indicates the field while strong and vibrant is nonetheless more vulnerable than it seems on the surface.

Second, do not separate the economics of wages from the economics of rates – they are two views of the same economic process. If you want to address wages, address rates or other subsidized payments for care. Do not set up a separate process for addressing wages.

Third, do not go it alone. This will be difficult given the lack of support at the state level but there may be other collaborative strategies that can be done at the local level. You have for years addressed deficits at the state level with local funds. There needs to be a movement to reverse that trend.

Fourth, keep your focus on the system of quality care that has been created and coordinate it with the new programs being developed under Youngstar with the aim of developing a comprehensive community culture supporting the positive early childhood development of children and their families.

Finally thank you for your service to the community, its children and the programs that serve them.