

Wisconsin Chapter

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



WIAAP

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Joint Finance Committee

December 15, 2021

Rep. Born, Co-Chair
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Honorable Co-Chairs Born and Marklein, and members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WIAAP), representing 1,000 pediatricians, primary care providers, residents and medical students, we write to express our strong support of the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) proposal recently submitted to you under s.16.54 request for passive review. Specifically, this request addresses expenditure of the \$194M from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) designated Supplemental Discretionary Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

In particular, we would like to shine a light on the critical importance of the \$7.78M provision for **Evidence-Based Social Emotional Tools**, in particular those targeting interventions in the infant/toddler age group.

Child/family service professionals in Wisconsin have direct access to infants and children, giving them a unique opportunity to identify undiagnosed and unaddressed mental health concerns early, however, they are under-prepared to effectively intervene on their own.

Many babies and young children experience emotional or behavioral disturbances – never more so than during the pandemic. These instances of early trauma paired with a

shortage of professionals adequately trained in early childhood mental health, have led to an epidemic of undiagnosed mental health concerns.

Left unaddressed, distress caused by worsening mental health symptoms leads to:

- higher long-term individual, community, and state-level costs associated with mental health treatment
- increased dropout rates
- higher unemployment
- greater reliance on social welfare programs
- increased rates of incarceration
- family conflict and child abuse and neglect
- substance abuse

But we can change the future for Wisconsin's children. The funding structure in DCF's proposal would provide the means to improve the quality and credentials of professionals already in the field through **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsements**, and would increase the use of the **Wisconsin Pyramid Model** training as part of increasing those competencies. Implementation of the Pyramid Model improves early literacy and comprehension skills and reduces problem behaviors.

An exciting result of building this capacity is the ability to construct a robust system of **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)**. IECMHC is a proven, evidence-based, comprehensive consultation program for any professional who works with infants, young children, and their families. It helps bolster the mental health workforce in Wisconsin by empowering existing child/family serving professionals and systems with direct access to mental health support and resources. Consultants provide expert guidance and resources to empower these professionals to effectively address mental health concerns early, circumventing the need for more aggressive, costly intervention later in life.

Please support DCF's request as submitted. It is thoughtful and well aligned with the work we and so many other stakeholders do in Wisconsin to ensure the health and well-being of all children.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Campbell, MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Sarah Campbell, MD, FAAP, President