

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Investing in Early Childhood & Supporting Working Parents

“Early childhood development is the compelling economic, social and moral issue of our time. It helps provide all children with the opportunity they deserve to develop their natural abilities. It is also the most effective way to build the workforce and customer base we need. Investing in young children’s healthy development is a financial and social imperative for any country.” - **John Pepper, Former Chairman and CEO, Procter & Gamble; Co-Chair, ReadyNation CEO Task Force on Early Childhood**

- Studies show that for every \$1 invested in early childhood the return is on average \$4-\$9; some studies have found it to be as high as \$16-\$20.
- The average cost of child care for an infant and a toddler in WI is **\$21,000/year**.
- **Less than 15%** of child care facilities in WI receive a 4 or 5 star rating.
- In Wisconsin **73%** of children under 6 live in families where both parents work. **23%** of children under 6 live in single-parent households.
- The crisis of affordable, high quality care disproportionately affects poor families, single parents and minority communities. Here in Marathon County, a single parent with 2 kids just above the poverty line could spend up to **88% of annual income** on child care.
- **By age 5, 90%** of a child’s brain development is complete, the majority of this occurring in the first 3 years. The experience in the first five years of a child’s life will profoundly affect his/her ability to succeed in school and in life.
- One of the strongest predictors of high school graduation is third grade reading level. The best predictor of 3rd grade reading level is the number of words known at age 2. Poor children know half as many words at age 2 as their more affluent peers.
- The United States is the **only major economy** in the world that does not guarantee paid maternity or family leave. Thus employers have the responsibility and opportunity to create and publicize their policy on parental leave.
- Studies all over the world show that businesses with family-friendly policies that promote parent/child bonding, especially in the first year of life, result in a higher rate of employee retention, a more productive workforce, and a measurable cost benefit.
- Investment in high quality care and early education are seen to save costs on special education, juvenile discipline and criminal justice while increasing school-readiness and high school graduation rates and creating a more skilled and productive workforce.