

# Policy Position: Child Care

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**

west central michigan

## What We Believe

Child Care and early learning programs are essential for children, working families, and our nation's economic future. Early learning and child care programs provide not only important social and emotional skills for children but provide important economic and career benefits to working parents, particularly working women. Many barriers exist to accessing these programs including high costs of care, too few public or low-cost options, and limited funding for child care programs or subsidies. Additionally, many parents experience barriers to receiving state child care assistance even if they are eligible. In the face of these barriers, research has shown working women are more likely than men to either cut back work hours or leave the labor force entirely to care for children. Unfortunately, leaving the workforce or reducing one's time within the workplace, even for less than a year, can have long-term negative consequences for women's careers and lifetime earnings.

While child care costs and access have been critical issues for working families in Michigan, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed additional concerns for Michigan families, including the intersecting public health, economic, and racial inequities in the child care system. It has also exacerbated barriers to women's full economic participation as well as inequities for women and families of color.

At the YWCA West Central Michigan, we believe that all families should have access to systems of early care and education. Working women should not have to choose between caring for their children and providing for their households. Access to low-cost, quality child care offers opportunities for empowerment and eliminating barriers to larger inequities within our communities.

## What We Know

- "The cost of child care for a parent with two children in a center in Michigan is approximately \$18,600 a year—exceeding the average annual cost of rent (\$9,900) or a mortgage (\$15,000), and rivaling the cost of college tuition for two students (\$26,800)" [1].
- Over nearly a decade, the percentage of all children in Michigan ages 0-12 who received subsidized childcare dropped from 4.2% in 2009 to 2.3% in 2018 [2].

- According to a survey developed by the Michigan Women's Commission, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 2.2% of respondents indicated that they had to leave the workforce to take care of their children; approximately 1.7% of respondents indicated that their spouse had to leave the workforce to care for their children [3].
- More than 4 of every 10 people in Michigan live in “child care deserts,” defined as any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no licensed child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots [4].
- "In 2003, Michigan’s spending on child care was the 11th highest in the nation; by 2013, the state had dropped to the 11th lowest in the country" [5].

## What We Support

At the federal, state, and local levels, the YWCA West Central Michigan seeks to educate, advocate, and urges policymakers to

- Provide federal funding and support to safely reopen and expand childcare services impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Address the costs and access to child care for low-income families.
- Invest in the training, professional development, and living wages / improved compensation for those in the child care workforce.

*Adopted by YWCA West Central Michigan Board of Directors  
in February 2021*

[1] "Price of Child Care in Michigan"(2019) Childcare Aware of America. Retrieved from [https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/2019%20Price%20of%20Care%20State%20Sheets/Michigan.pdf?utm\\_campaign=2019%20Cost%20of%20Care&utm\\_source=2019%20COC%20-%20MI](https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/2019%20Price%20of%20Care%20State%20Sheets/Michigan.pdf?utm_campaign=2019%20Cost%20of%20Care&utm_source=2019%20COC%20-%20MI)

[2] Sorenson, P. (18 June 2019). "Baby steps: More investments needed to make child care work for Michigan families and children." Michigan League for Public Policy., Retrieved from <https://mlpp.org/baby-steps-more-investments-needed-to-make-child-care-work-for-michigan-families-and-children/>

[3] "Survey of Child Care Use During the Pandemic" (2020) Michigan Women's Commission. Retrieved from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mwc/MWC-COVID19\\_Child\\_Care\\_Use\\_Survey\\_Result\\_PPT\\_1-26-21\\_715331\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mwc/MWC-COVID19_Child_Care_Use_Survey_Result_PPT_1-26-21_715331_7.pdf)

[4] Public Policy Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak in Michigan: CHILD CARE (23 November 2020)., Michigan League for Public Policy., Retrieved from <https://mlpp.org/public-policy-response-to-the-covid-19-outbreak-in-michigan-childcare/>

[5] Sorenson, P (2019), *ibid.*