



Urban League of  
Greater Madison



Public Forum

## Why Voting Matters: Consequences for Childcare Funding and Diversity in Education

**November 7, 2023, 6-7:30 pm**

**Location:** In person at Urban League of Greater Madison  
2222 S. Park St. or [via zoom](#)

### Panelists

- **Dr. Laura Dresser**, Associate Director of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), Clinical Associate Professor, UW–Madison School of Social Work
- **Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings**, Professor Emerita, UW-Madison School of Education

### Moderator

- **Joy Cardin**, retired Wisconsin Public Radio talk show host, a member of the League of Women Voters of Dane County, and a member of the board of directors of the LWV of Wisconsin.

Elections at the national, state, and local level have profound impacts on the day-to-day lives of Wisconsin families. In this forum, we will address two issues determined by those we elect: the ongoing childcare crisis and attacks on diversity in education. We will cover:

- The expiration of the federal Child Care Stabilization Program in September, 2023 and proposals to address the loss of those funds.
- The current state of childcare availability in Dane County and its importance to working families and employers
- Attempts to censor diversity in teaching and libraries, including the campaign against Critical Race Theory
- Efforts to condition funding on the elimination of DEI programs

Crucially, this panel will map the terrain of both of these pressing issues *and* highlight what ordinary citizens can do to have an impact at the ballot box and in their communities to protect Wisconsin families.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why is adequate childcare funding important for working families and our communities?
2. What is something new that you learned about the threats to childcare funding?
3. Why is diversity in education important to our communities?
4. What is something new that you learned about the attacks on diversity in education?
5. What can the Dane County League do to promote adequate childcare funding and protection of educational diversity?

**League Discussion Units** will meet to discuss these issues during the third week of November. If you aren't already a member of a discussion unit, [you can find contact information here](#).

## League of Women Voters Positions

LWVUS supports programs, services, and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it, in order to increase access to employment and to prevent and reduce poverty.

[LWV-impact-2020.pdf](#)

Support for equal rights for all regardless of race, color, creed, ancestry, national origin, religion, disability, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, or any other class protected by applicable state or federal laws, with recognition of the special needs of Native Americans. [Equality | MyLO](#)

## The Childcare Crisis

On September 30, 2023, the \$24 billion federal Child Care Stabilization Program expired. These funds were part of the American Rescue Plan Act and supported childcare programs by paying for staff, providing training, purchasing supplies, and reducing tuition costs for families. Experts say that the expiration of these funds could lead to the closure of 70,000 child care programs, affecting roughly 3.2 million children, throughout the country. [Child Care Cliff: 3.2 Million Children Likely to Lose Spots with End of Federal Funds](#) In Wisconsin, the state legislature voted to end a statewide pandemic-era child care subsidy program called Child Care Counts which will run out of funds in January, 2024, further exacerbating the crisis. [Wisconsin Republicans vote to end funding for child care program | AP News](#)

Even childcare centers that remain open will face funding deficits that will result in higher tuition and/or lower pay for workers or reduced staff. Low-income families, including a disproportionate number of Black and Brown families, will face the brunt of these costs. [Preschool will become a luxury if Congress doesn't act](#)

As childcare becomes increasingly inaccessible, parents are often forced to exit the workforce. Women are disproportionately impacted by these closures, since lack of affordable childcare is the number one reason why women leave the workforce. [Impact of the child care crisis on women/mothers](#). Experts estimate that the current childcare crisis will cost U.S. families \$9 billion each year in lost earnings when parents are forced to exit the workforce. [Child Care Cliff: 3.2 Million Children Likely to Lose Spots with End of Federal Funds](#)

Experts estimate that the projected closures of daycare centers will cause 232,000 childcare workers to lose their jobs and will cost states across the country \$10.6 billion in lost tax and business revenue. The failure of our government to adequately support these crucial institutions will have disastrous impacts on Wisconsin families, children, and the broader economy.

## Potential Solutions

Governor Evers introduced legislation that would extend funding for Child Care Counts, provide additional funding for higher education, and support a family leave program. [Governor's child care funding proposal might get a second life - Wisconsin Examiner](#) That legislation was not passed. Recently, Governor Evers allocated \$170 billion to keep Child Care Counts running through June, 2025. [Evers directs another \\$170M in federal funds to continue Child Care Counts subsidies](#)

In Congress, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and U.S. Representative Robert C. Scott (D-VA-03) reintroduced the Child Care for Working Families Act which would make child care affordable for working families, raise wages for child care workers, and expand access to high quality preschool. [Murray, Scott Reintroduce Child Care for Working Families Act to Tackle Child Care Crisis and Get Families the Child Care & Pre-K They Need](#)

## Attacks on Diversity in Education

From banning books to censoring the curriculums taught in schools to efforts to defund DEI initiatives, the fight against Critical Race Theory and diversity initiatives in education have become a national flashpoint. These attacks have the potential to shape curriculum and what students learn in schools. The Wisconsin

state legislature has introduced numerous bills to ban “Critical Race Theory” in K-12 public schools. In 2021, the Senate passed a bill that would ban teaching students and training employees about concepts like implicit bias and systemic racism. [Wisconsin Senate sends critical race theory ban to Evers | AP News](#) Governor Tony Evers vetoed this legislation in early 2022. [Evers vetoes bill that would have barred school lessons on systemic racism](#) These policies and the broader climate surrounding them has an impact on teachers even if these laws fail to pass, as teachers are increasingly conscious about the content they teach and potential backlash they may face. [Anti-‘Critical Race Theory’ Laws Are Affecting Teachers | Time](#)

These policies have also shaped what books young people have access to in schools and public libraries. In 2023, the state Senators introduced a bill that would remove any books deemed “harmful” from public schools and libraries. [Following National Trend, Wisconsin Lawmakers Introduce Book Ban - WORT-FM 89.9](#) On the local level, 29 different books have been banned in six different school districts across Wisconsin. Book bans disproportionately target books that have LGBTQ+ themes or prominent characters of color. [Banned in the USA: The Growing Movement to Censor Books in Schools](#)

In September 2023, the state legislature voted to cut the University of Wisconsin System’s budget by \$32 million unless the system eliminated diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. [Republicans vote to cut University of Wisconsin System's budget by \\$32M in diversity programs spat | AP News](#) So far, the UW system has resisted the pressure to cut DEI programs.. [UW-Madison to keep DEI positions despite \\$7 million budget cuts by GOP state legislature, report says | KATV](#)

## **Actions You Can Take:**

1. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper outlining the importance of childcare funding and diversity in education.
2. If you have a connection to UW Madison, write a letter of support to Lori Reesor, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, to show your support for the university’s commitment to continue funding DEI programs.
3. Stay informed and discuss the childcare crisis and diversity in education, including potential solutions, with friends, family, and community members.
4. Volunteer with the League of Women Voters or other community organizations to educate the broader community about these issues and register people to vote.
5. Your suggestions?