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Child care delivers grown-up economic impact

Report links almost 20,000 jobs to southeastern Wisconsin's child-care industry

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN – *Friday, May 29, 2009* – Child care employs about 12,400 people in southeastern Wisconsin and creates another 7,000 jobs in related industries, according to the Public Policy Forum's latest report from its three-year research initiative on early childhood care and education.

“Child care is a vital part of the region's infrastructure and probably should be viewed by policy makers in the same way as roads, transit, or energy,” says Rob Henken, Forum president.

In Milwaukee County alone, child care employs more people than hotels, food service, advertising, food manufacturing, or architecture and engineering-related services.

Other key findings in the Forum's regional economic analysis include:

- There are currently 3,500 child-care businesses in southeastern Wisconsin;

- Child care generates an estimated \$661 million in revenue annually. In Milwaukee County only, revenue is about \$376 million;
- Child care generates another \$648 million in sales in other industries;
- An estimated 15,914 parents of children under the age of 6 are freed up for work because of the existence of child care. Assuming that each working parent earns the median income for southeastern Wisconsin, these parents account for about \$742 million annually.

“In light of these statistics, policymakers must consider how child-care regulatory changes and quality enhancements affect not only providers and children, but also the larger economy,” Henken says. “We’re talking about an essential part of the region’s infrastructure.”

This latest Forum report lays the groundwork for a report to be released later in 2009 on the costs and benefits of a high-quality early childhood care and education system in southeastern Wisconsin.

Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum, established in 1913 as a local government watchdog, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of government and the development of southeastern Wisconsin through objective research of public policy issues.

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