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## Secretary Gassman Says Early Education Best Investment

### *Leads Discussion at Economic Summit of Governor's Agenda for Children*

MADISON – At a state economic summit on early education today, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said early education is the best investment Wisconsin can make to sustain economic growth and highlighted Governor Doyle's education budget initiatives to help our children and working families succeed.

"Governor Doyle wants every child to succeed and to go as far as their time, hard work, and talent will take them," Secretary Gassman said. "By investing in early education, we can set our kids on course to success. Early education is the best investment we can make to ensure not only the success of the next generation, but our economic future and quality of life for years to come."

Secretary Gassman addressed nearly 200 business and education leaders at the Economic Summit: *Building the Case for Investments in Early Education* in Madison today. The Summit is Wisconsin's kick-off event for the national Week of the Young Child. Among others joining her in support of early education and quality child care was David Lawrence, Jr., a retired publisher of *The Miami Herald* who is now president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and an early education scholar at the University of Florida.

"Study after study has shown that for every dollar we invest in early education, we see substantial returns, from eight to 17 times the amount of that investment, in the success and productivity of children when they become adults, and in the savings on numerous programs addressing today's societal ills," Secretary Gassman said.

Secretary Gassman said Governor Doyle's budget includes his Quality Care for Quality Kids proposal, which is at the core of his *KidsFirst* initiative. The 5-star rating system will help parents choose quality care. The budget item also includes \$2.8 million to help providers improve quality, and increases scholarship and stipends for child care worker training by \$1.2 million a year.

Secretary Gassman noted other children and family items in Governor Doyle's budget, including:

- Child care tax credit, saving the typical working family \$400 a year;
- \$1.5 million to Educare Center of Milwaukee for early childhood intervention and education;
- \$3 million more for 4-year-old kindergarten;
- Nearly \$3.3 million to triple funding for the school breakfast program;
- More than \$10 million a year to fully fund the SAGE program to lower class sizes in the early grades;
- Health care for every child, regardless of family income;
- New cabinet-level Department of Children and Families, focused on the needs of the most vulnerable.