

BRIDGEPROJECT

EXPANDING THE BRIDGE PROJECT IN MILWAUKEE

The Bridge Project seeks to eradicate childhood poverty. It is Milwaukee's first unconditional cash program for moms and their babies, nurturing them from pregnancy through the first three years of life.



Following the success of Milwaukee's first cohort of 122 mothers, the transformative program will provide unconditional cash assistance to a second cohort of at least 180 eligible, low-income pregnant women. The program aims to empower mothers and strengthen families by providing flexible financial support during pregnancy and throughout the first three years of their babies' lives.

The expansion of the Bridge Project in Milwaukee is made possible through generous private funding from the Zilber Family Foundation, the Yabuki Family Foundation and other donors; continued public investment through City of Milwaukee ARPA funds; and administrative funding from The Monarch Foundation.

WE BELIEVE IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Putting money directly in the hands of mothers empowers women to make decisions about their finances and the wellbeing of their babies. Investing early in a child's life can allow an entire generation to separate from the toxic stresses of poverty, break intergenerational cycles, and provide the environment for children to grow into healthy adults – physically, financially, and mentally.

Leading economists agree that early interventions have the highest return on investment (Heckman Curve).

- ▶ Our brains are **25%** grown at birth.
- ▶ Our brains are **50%** grown by age 1.
- ▶ Our brains are **80%** grown by age 3.

WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Direct cash is a highly scalable solution that can be rolled out to large populations immediately. It minimizes interference and maximizes impact. It empowers participants to make their own choices for their families.

Cash is simple, flexible and empowering. Unrestricted cash assistance recognizes mothers' right to make their own financial decisions. Additionally, cash allows mothers the freedom to spend on essentials like food, rent, or childcare without restrictions. This approach challenges the stigma that marginalized groups can't manage their finances, promoting autonomy and dignity by trusting them to know what's best for their families.

IMPACT FROM COHORT 1:



67% decrease
in housing
instability.



33% saw a
reduction in
food insecurity.



23% began new
job training or
education programs.

NO BABY SHOULD BE BORN INTO POVERTY



In Wisconsin, about 12%
of children, or roughly **1 in 8**,
live below the poverty line.



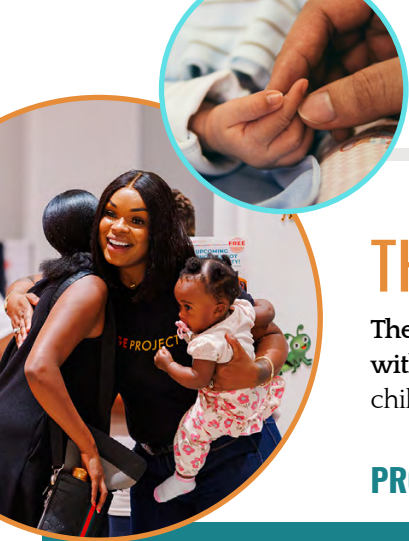
Wisconsin's minimum wage is at
the federal minimum of **\$7.25/hr.**

Among the 20 states sticking to this minimum wage, 16 see over 12% of their child population living in poverty, highlighting a correlation between low wages and child poverty rates.



Milwaukee contends with the **second-highest poverty rate** among the top 50 most populated cities in the U.S.

44% of children are living in poverty in Zilber Family Foundation priority neighborhoods of Lindsay Heights, Clarke Square and Layton Boulevard West.



THE BRIDGE PROJECT IN ACTION

The Bridge Project's second cohort will provide at least 180 eligible low-income, pregnant individuals with unconditional cash. No strings attached. The cash can be spent on anything — food, formula, rent, childcare, diapers — truly, whatever the mother decides. The program duration is three years.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE:

\$1,125 one-time,
upfront prenatal stipend

\$750 per month
for the first 15 months of
program participation

\$375 per month
for the remaining 21 months
of program participation

HOW DO MOTHERS APPLY?

Applications will be available online beginning
OCTOBER 1, 2026.

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis for eligibility and eligible program participants will be selected by lottery. Applications will remain open until all program slots have been filled.

ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS ARE SELECTED THROUGH A RANDOMIZED SELECTION PROCESS AND MUST:

- ▶ Be 18 years or older
- ▶ Be 23 weeks pregnant or less
- ▶ Live in the City of Milwaukee
- ▶ Have an annual household income of less than \$39,000 USD



ONLINE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS
OPEN OCTOBER 1