



CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION UPDATES 2017

In 2017, many states made new or expanded investments in early care and education programs or strengthened their early care and education policies. States used the additional funding for purposes such as making child care assistance or prekindergarten available to more children and families and supporting increases in payment rates for child care providers. However, a number of states cut funding for early care and education programs, made it more difficult for families to access child care assistance, or took other steps backward. Some states increased funding for certain early care and education programs while cutting funding for others. None of the states provided funding increases or made policy improvements that were sufficient to fully address the unmet need for affordable, high-quality early care and education for families and their children. Federal and state policymakers still must make significant new investments and policy changes if families are to have access to the child care and early education opportunities that enable parents to work and children to get a strong start in school and in life.

- **Alabama's** Education Trust Fund Budget, approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Kay Ivey, expanded funding for the state prekindergarten program by \$13 million. This increase in state funding, together with funding from the third year of the state's four-year federal Preschool Development Grant, is expected to support 100 or more new prekindergarten classrooms.<sup>1</sup> However, a bill that would have required more of the state's child care centers to meet basic health and safety standards and undergo inspections passed the House but failed to get a vote in the full Senate. The state currently exempts religiously affiliated child care centers from licensing and inspection requirements—and makes it very easy for centers to qualify for this exemption. The bill would have required licensing of all child care programs that received state or federal funds operating for profit or that had at least one child receiving child care assistance; would have required annual inspections of all license-exempt providers; would have required license-exempt faith-based providers to provide the Department of Human Resources with fire/health inspection reports, criminal background checks on employees, and proof of liability, casualty, and property insurance annually and when changes occurred; and would have required license-exempt centers to post notice in plain view that the facility was not licensed.<sup>2</sup>
- **Arizona** established the Early Literacy Grant Program Fund and appropriated \$12 million over two years for the program.<sup>3</sup> Under this new program, the state's Department of Education will award three-year grants to eligible schools to increase the reading proficiency of students in kindergarten to third grade or to provide full-day kindergarten structured to increase reading proficiency.<sup>4</sup> Governor Doug Ducey had proposed to allow the grants to be used for preschool, but the final legislation creating the program does not permit funds to be used in this way.<sup>5</sup> The state also extended the lifetime time limit for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance from 12 months—which had been the most restrictive time limit in the country—to 24 months.<sup>6</sup> However, to receive the extension, parents must comply with all job search and training requirements and their children must meet school attendance requirements.<sup>7</sup>



- **California's** final budget for FY 2017-18, approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Jerry Brown, increased total funding for child care and development programs by \$320 million over the prior fiscal year, to a total of \$3.9 billion.<sup>8</sup> This increase included:
  - \$25 million to increase the income limit to qualify for child care assistance from 70 percent of the 2007 state median income to 70 percent of the current state median income; begin allowing families already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it up to an income of 85 percent of state median income; and ensure eligible families are able to receive child care assistance for a full 12 months without having to report changes or having their eligibility affected by those changes, except in limited circumstances. These policy changes were effective as of July 1, 2017.
  - \$92.7 million to increase the payment rate for state-funded preschool and other child care providers contracting directly with the state.
  - \$40.6 million to update payment rates for child care providers that serve families receiving child care vouchers from the 75th percentile of 2014 market rates to the 75th percentile of 2016 market rates as of January 2018.
  - \$19 million for emergency child care vouchers for foster children, with a commitment for \$31 million in ongoing annual funding in subsequent years.
  - \$7.9 million to add 2,959 full-day slots in the state-funded preschool program starting in March 2018.
  - \$50 million to increase provider payment rates for the After School and Education Safety Program.
  - \$1.8 million for the San Gabriel YMCA to build a child care facility for disadvantaged and homeless youth.

In addition, Governor Brown signed legislation specifying that low-income parents can qualify for child care assistance while enrolled in English as a Second Language or high school equivalency courses.<sup>9</sup> The governor also signed legislation that prohibits state-funded preschool programs from expelling a child because of the child's behavior unless the program has provided behavioral supports and taken other steps to maintain the child's enrollment, has determined that the child's continued enrollment would present a continued serious safety threat to the child or other children, and has referred the parents to other appropriate placements for their child.<sup>10</sup>

- **Colorado** increased funding for the child care assistance program by \$2.5 million and increased funding for the Healthy Steps for Young Children home visiting program by \$572,000.<sup>11</sup> The state also enacted legislation that allows family child care providers caring for up to four unrelated children to be exempt from regulation; previously, only providers caring for one child or for two or more siblings from the same family were exempt from regulation.<sup>12</sup>

The state extended a refundable child care expenses tax credit that was first adopted in 2014 and was scheduled to expire after tax year 2016; it is now available through tax year 2019. This refundable tax credit helps low-income families who have little or no federal tax liability and who were therefore not previously able to take advantage of the state child care expenses tax credit (which is based on the nonrefundable federal child and dependent care tax credit). Families must have a federal adjusted gross income of less than \$25,000 to qualify for the refundable tax credit and can receive a credit equal to 25 percent of their child care expenses, with a maximum amount of \$500 for one dependent or \$1,000 for two or more dependents. The legislature appropriated approximately \$6 million per year, on average, through the sunset period for this tax credit.<sup>13</sup>

- **Connecticut** stopped providing child care assistance to new applicants in late 2016, but it reopened the program and began serving families on the waiting list—which had grown to 5,769 families—in November 2017.<sup>14</sup> However, Governor Dannel Malloy, who was mandated by the legislature to make a total of \$880 million in cuts as part of the FY 2018-19 budget, reduced funding for some early childhood services—for example, state Head Start funding was cut by \$103,740.<sup>15</sup>
- **The District of Columbia** provided \$15 million in one-time funds for a newly established Child Care Quality Access Fund; \$2 million of this funding will be used to increase the number of subsidized slots, \$11 million will be used to support the creation



of non-subsidized child care slots, and the remaining \$2 million will be used for quality improvement grants and renovation of District-owned buildings to lease as child care centers. The District also increased the budget of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education by \$4.5 million to support increased payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance. In addition, the City Council approved legislation and directed \$150,000 to conduct a needs evaluation of child care provided during non-traditional hours (hours outside of 7 am to 6 pm on weekdays).<sup>16</sup>

- **Florida** increased funding for the child care assistance program by \$25 million to reduce the number of children and families on the program's waiting list. The state also increased funding for Early Steps, which provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers (under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), by \$5 million. However, the state cut funding for T.E.A.C.H., which provides scholarships for child care workers to attend school and earn a degree or credentials in early education and then provides bonuses to those who complete their educational program, by \$7 million. In addition, the state reduced funding for Help Me Grow—a statewide system that helps to identify developmental and/or behavioral concerns in a child's first eight years of life and link children and their families to services and supports—by \$600,000. Funding for Healthy Start (which provides prenatal support) and the Nurse-Family Partnership program (which provides home visiting) was reduced by a total of \$1.4 million as well.<sup>17</sup>
- **Georgia's** final budget increased the appropriation for the state prekindergarten program, which is supported by lottery funding, from \$358 million to \$365 million; this increase will be used to support merit-based pay for teachers and teacher recruitment and retention initiatives while allowing the program's 84,000 slots to be maintained.<sup>18</sup> Yet, per-student funding for the prekindergarten program is still approximately 11 percent below the 2009 inflation-adjusted level.<sup>19</sup> The state also increased funding for its child care assistance program by \$5.5 million to support higher (tiered) payment rates for child care providers meeting higher quality standards.<sup>20</sup> However, since August 2016, intake for the child care assistance program has remained frozen for all families except those in certain priority groups.<sup>21</sup>
- **Hawaii** expanded funding for prekindergarten to support five new preschool classrooms in the 2018-19 school year. The state also provided \$300,000 in new funding for family-child interaction programs such as Tutu and Me and Keiki Steps, which work with low-income families to support children's school readiness.<sup>22</sup>
- **Illinois** enacted its first full-year, fully-funded state budget since FY 2014 and provided significant funding increases for early care and education programs,<sup>23</sup> including:
  - \$77 million in additional funding for the child care assistance program above the expected FY 2017 expenditure level,<sup>24</sup> bringing the FY 2018 appropriation included in the state budget to \$476.8 million.<sup>25</sup> This additional funding allowed the state to increase the income limit to qualify for child care assistance from 162 percent of poverty back to the level it had been prior to July 2015, 185 percent of poverty, as of October 2017<sup>26</sup> and to restore eligibility for families enrolled in non-TANF education and training programs (as discussed below).<sup>27</sup> However, Governor Bruce Rauner's administration made an across-the-board cut to programs and services, which included scaling back the total appropriation for child care assistance by \$59.4 million from the initial level in the FY 2018 state budget.<sup>28</sup>
  - \$50 million in additional funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant, which supports preschool programs and services for infants and toddlers, bringing total funding to a new high of \$443.7 million.<sup>29</sup>
  - \$4 million in additional funding for early intervention services beyond the expected FY 2017 expenditure level, bringing total funding to \$96.7 million.<sup>30</sup>
  - Funding levels for home visiting programs—\$10 million for Healthy Families and \$6.87 million for Parents Too Soon—that return them to their FY 2014 levels.<sup>31</sup>



In addition, the state enacted legislation once again allowing families not receiving TANF to qualify for child care assistance while participating in education and training activities; the Rauner administration had adopted emergency rules in 2015 making these families ineligible for child care assistance.<sup>32</sup> The state also approved legislation prohibiting preschool education and early childhood programs funded by the State Board of Education, as well as all licensed child care homes and centers, from expelling children.<sup>33</sup> The legislation requires early childhood programs to respond to a child's challenging behaviors with a series of steps, including remediation and intervention plans, consultation with parents, and referral for services; a child can be transitioned to a new setting if it is necessary for the well-being of the child, other students, or staff, but only after these steps have been exhausted.<sup>34</sup>

- **Indiana's** legislature passed, and Governor Eric Holcomb signed, a measure expanding the state's On My Way Pre-K program from five counties to 20, and the state budget increased funding for the program by \$10 million, to \$22 million.<sup>35</sup> The program serves families with incomes up to 185 percent of poverty in the original five counties, and up to 127 percent of poverty in the 15 expansion counties.<sup>36</sup>
- **Iowa** budgeted an additional \$7.6 million for child care assistance. However, the legislature failed to advance three bills that would have increased the income limit to qualify for child care assistance from 145 percent of poverty<sup>37</sup> to 185 percent of poverty and that would have raised payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance.<sup>38</sup>
- **Kansas's** legislature, overriding Governor Sam Brownback's veto, approved a tax reform package that rolled back massive tax cuts passed in 2012<sup>39</sup>—tax cuts that had led to a drastic reduction in state revenues available to support education and other crucial state programs. The tax reform package enacted in 2017 restored credits and deductions for families, including the state Child and Dependent Care Credit, as well.<sup>40</sup> The legislature also rejected the governor's proposal to securitize (sell off) the tobacco-settlement revenue that supports the state's Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF); instead, the CIF will continue to provide the same funding for early childhood programs as in 2017.<sup>41</sup> The Healthy Families home visiting program, which receives some of its funding from CIF, will receive an additional \$3 million in TANF funding annually.<sup>42</sup> In addition, when tobacco-settlement revenues exceeded the expected amount by \$4 million, the legislature ensured that this funding remained in the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund, rejecting the governor's proposal to use the funding for other purposes.<sup>43</sup> In another positive step, the legislature adopted a new school funding formula that fully funds all-day kindergarten and increases preschool funding for at-risk children.<sup>44</sup>
- **Louisiana's** FY 2018 budget included an additional \$5 million for School Readiness Tax Credits,<sup>45</sup> a package of tax incentives for parents, child care programs, child care teachers and directors, and businesses to encourage the provision and use of higher-quality child care.<sup>46</sup> The legislature also turned back five bills that would have reduced or eliminated these tax credits.<sup>47</sup> However, as a result of a 2 percent across-the-board cut to the state budget, funding for LA4, the state's largest prekindergarten program, was reduced from \$75.5 million to \$74 million, and funding for another state prekindergarten program, the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development program, was reduced from \$6.6 million to \$6.4 million.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the state began placing families applying for child care assistance on the waiting list as of July 1, 2017.<sup>49</sup>
- **Maine's** Department of Health and Human Services made significant changes to its family child care regulations, weakening health and safety protections, through an emergency rule that went into effect September 20, 2017. Legislators will have an opportunity to review the rule and reverse it during the next legislative session. The revised regulations eliminate the right of parents to visit and observe their family child care program any time during the hours of operation and be informed of licensing deficiencies found by state inspectors; allows higher child-staff ratios than previously permitted; removes language on the rights of children in family child care; permits family child care providers to be employed without first receiving CPR and first aid training; and removes language regarding children with disabilities.<sup>50</sup>



Separately, the state changed the school funding formula to allow school districts to immediately receive state funding for new publicly funded preschool classrooms; prior to this change, school districts had to initially fund new classrooms using local funds.<sup>51</sup> The legislature also protected \$1.8 million in state Head Start funding, rejecting Governor Paul LePage's proposal to cut Head Start funding by \$1.2 million and continuing to provide another \$575,000 that had originally been a one-time expenditure.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the Department of Health and Human Services increased payment rates for family child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance from the 50th percentile to the 75th percentile of 2015 market rates.<sup>53</sup>

- **Maryland** enacted legislation that prohibits children enrolled in public prekindergarten, kindergarten, first grade, or second grade from being suspended or expelled from school (with certain exceptions for an expulsion required by federal law or a suspension for a limited number of days under certain circumstances). The legislation outlines the intervention and support that must be provided to students in those grades who are suspended or at risk of suspension.<sup>54</sup>
- **Massachusetts** spent \$38.5 million to increase payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance; this amount included \$15 million in funds reserved for this purpose in the FY 2018 budget as well as additional unspent child care funds.<sup>55</sup> With this funding, the state increased provider payment rates by 6 percent effective July 2017, and announced an additional 2 percent increase in October 2017.<sup>56</sup> Overall, the FY 2018 budget for early care and education increased slightly, to \$558.87 million.<sup>57</sup> The legislature also protected funding for several early care and education programs by overriding reductions that had been made by Governor Charlie Baker using his line-item veto, including \$1 million for Reach Out and Read; \$1.25 million for early childhood mental health services; \$200,000 for preschool planning grants; \$100,000 for the Parent-Child Home Program; and \$100,000 for an early education workforce study.<sup>58</sup>
- **Michigan** Governor Rick Snyder signed a budget for FY 2018 that provided more than \$39 million in new child care spending. This new funding included:
  - \$24 million to increase payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance.
  - \$5.5 million to increase the income limit to qualify for child care assistance from 125 percent of poverty to 130 percent of poverty.
  - \$7.1 million to support comprehensive fingerprinting and background checks of all child care providers and staff as required under the federal law reauthorizing the Child Care and Development Block Grant (and \$800,000 for staffing to complete the background checks in 2018).
  - \$1.4 million for oversight of license-exempt family, friend, and neighbor care.
  - \$1.5 million for the state's Department of Health and Human Services to make technological upgrades necessary to implement the payment rate increase and update the agency's system.
  - \$1 million for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to help child care providers attain the educational credentials required for higher ratings in the state's quality rating and improvement system.<sup>59</sup>
- **Minnesota's** legislature passed and Governor Mark Dayton signed an FY 2018-19 budget that provided \$18.6 million to allow families receiving child care assistance to enroll continuously for a full 12 months, as required by the federal law reauthorizing the Child Care and Development Block Grant. The legislature approved \$519,000 in new funding for community grants to expand the supply of high-quality child care as well. However, the budget also reduced state funding for child care assistance, with \$15 million in savings through "program integrity" changes (such as limiting payments when a child has multiple providers) and a one-time use of \$18 million in federal child care funds.<sup>60</sup>

The budget provided \$20 million in new funding for Early Learning Scholarships; gave priority for scholarships to children who have experienced homelessness, are in foster care, are in need of protective services, or have a parent under age 21 pursuing a diploma or GED; began allowing scholarships—which had been limited to three- and four-year-olds and their younger siblings—for children birth through age two who are eligible under one of the four priorities; and delayed a



requirement for providers accepting scholarships to have a three- or four-star quality rating to 2020. The budget provided \$50 million for School Readiness Plus, a new prekindergarten program that prioritizes low-income students, as well. In addition, the budget increased funding for Nurse Home Visiting by \$614,000 and provided \$12 million for targeted home visiting for pregnant and parenting teens, nearly \$3 million for Early Childhood Family Education, and slightly more than \$1 million for the Parent-Child Home Program.<sup>61</sup>

The state increased its income eligibility limit for its Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit from slightly more than \$39,000 to \$62,000 for families with one dependent and to \$74,000 for families with two or more dependents. In addition, the maximum credit will increase from \$720 to \$1,050 for families with one dependent, and from \$1,440 to \$2,100 for families with two or more dependents.<sup>62</sup>

- **Montana** provided \$6 million in funding over the biennium (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2019) for a new pilot prekindergarten program.<sup>63</sup> Public schools, private schools, Head Start programs, child care centers, community-based programs, military programs, and tribal programs were eligible to apply for this funding.<sup>64</sup> The state awarded prekindergarten funding to 17 grantees, which will serve a total of 285 four- and five-year old children.<sup>65</sup> However, due to a significant shortfall in the biennium budget at the end of 2017, the governor made cuts to many state agencies and programs, including \$1.78 million in cuts over the biennium for early care and education services.<sup>66</sup> Among these cuts were a reduction in funding for the state's quality rating and improvement system (which will result in the elimination of free training for licensed providers not participating in the quality rating and improvement system, a 10 percent reduction in quality improvement incentives for providers, the elimination of grant awards, and less frequent assessments); the elimination of most professional development incentive awards for child care providers; the elimination of mini-grants to child care providers not participating in the quality rating and improvement system; a 22 percent cut in a contract for statewide distance learning offered to providers (which will be partially offset by fees paid by providers for courses that were previously offered for free); and a reduction in the contract to update and maintain the software for managing child care licensing and the child care assistance program.<sup>67</sup>
- **Nebraska's** legislature largely protected early care and education funding from cuts, despite a gap in the 2016-17 state budget as a result of revenues being \$276 million lower than projected and a \$1.2 billion projected shortfall for the 2017-19 biennial budget.<sup>68</sup> The only cut to early care and education funding was a reduction of approximately \$200,000 for the state's preschool grants, and there was a small increase in funding for coaching for child care providers under the state's quality rating and improvement system.<sup>69</sup> The legislature considered a bill that would have frozen payment rates for child care providers at existing levels (the 60th percentile of 2015 market rates), rather than continuing with the state's biennial adjustment based on the updated market rate survey; however, the legislation ultimately passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Pete Ricketts was amended to ensure that payment rates do not fall below the 50th percentile of updated market rates in FY 2017-18, or below the 60th percentile of updated market rates in FY 2018-19.<sup>70</sup>
- **Nevada** increased child care funding over the two-year budget cycle (FY 2018 and FY 2019) by \$34.1 million (\$8.3 million of which was TANF funding and the remainder of which was unspecified federal funding)<sup>71</sup> to provide child care assistance for an additional 1,800 children each year and to support increased payment rates for child care providers with higher star ratings in the state's quality rating and improvement system.<sup>72</sup> The state provided an additional \$1.1 million in funding to help enable child care providers on the waiting list for entry into the quality rating and improvement system to begin participating.<sup>73</sup> In addition, the state enacted legislation creating a new category for child care providers serving fewer than five children ("small child care establishments"); allowing small child care establishments the option to register with the state; requiring operators, employees, and certain adult residents of registered small child care establishments to undergo criminal background checks at least once every five years; authorizing the Division of Public and Behavioral Health of the Department of Health and Human Services to inspect a small child care establishment—whether registered or not—to secure compliance with or prevent a violation of legal requirements; and authorizing the Division to collect from a child care facility or small child care establishment the costs related to the violation or any necessary inspection or investigation.<sup>74</sup> The state also enacted legislation increasing the number of hours of training that must be completed each year by employees of child care facilities with five to 12 children.<sup>75</sup>



- **New Hampshire's** FY 2018 budget, approved by the legislature and Governor Chris Sununu, increased funding for the child care assistance program by \$15 million to help cover the additional costs of complying with new federal requirements under the Child Care and Development Block Grant reauthorization law.<sup>76</sup> The state also enacted legislation providing an additional \$1,100 per full-day kindergarten student starting in 2019, with further increases in subsequent years based on the proceeds generated by the state's newly legalized lottery; however, the funding increase falls short of providing full funding for full-day kindergarten.<sup>77</sup>
- **New Jersey's** FY 2018 budget, approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Chris Christie in July 2017, provided an additional \$25 million for the state prekindergarten program so that 2,000 more children could participate. However, in October, the governor diverted \$5.6 million of those preschool expansion funds to pay for state efforts to address the opioid epidemic.<sup>78</sup> In December 2017, state's Department of Human Services announced that \$15 million in new funding would be used to raise payment rates for child care centers serving families receiving child care assistance. In 2018, the state will increase payment rates for centers by 1 percent to 4 percent, depending on the age of the child, and will begin paying an additional 4 percent to 24 percent above the base rate to centers that have a three-star rating or higher in the state's quality rating and improvement system.<sup>79</sup> This is the first time child care centers will receive a rate increase since 2008.<sup>80</sup>
- **New York's** final FY 2017-18 budget cut funding for the child care assistance program by \$7 million, from \$806 million to \$799 million. This cut will cause an estimated 900 low-income families (families with incomes below 200 percent of poverty) to lose child care assistance. In addition, the budget reduced funding for a program that serves families slightly above the regular income limit for the child care assistance program (families with incomes between 200 and 275 percent of poverty) by \$424,000. Meanwhile, the state increased the amount of the state's child and dependent care tax credit that can be received by families with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000, but this expansion did not apply to lower-income families—those families affected by the cuts to the child care assistance program. The child and dependent care tax credit was also revised to increase the maximum expenses that can be claimed by families with more than two children or dependents in care.<sup>81</sup>

The state maintained existing funding for its prekindergarten program; provided \$5 million in new funding for full-day prekindergarten for three- and four-year-olds in high-need districts, with priority for those districts without state-funded prekindergarten; and re-appropriated \$11 million in unspent funding that had been allocated in 2016 for prekindergarten for three-year-olds. In addition, the budget provided \$35 million to establish the Empire State After-School program; this funding will be available to school districts and cities participating in the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative and counties or school districts with more than 30 percent or with 5,000 to 20,000 of their children living in poverty. However, funding for Advantage After School was reduced by \$2.5 million, to \$19.755 million. The budget also cut funding for the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program by \$75,000, to \$3.425 million, and maintained funding for the New York Healthy Families home visiting program at \$23.288 million.<sup>82</sup>

- **North Carolina's** final biennial budget allocated \$13 million in federal funding in FY 2017-18 and \$17 million in FY 2018-19 to increase its tiered payment rates for some categories of child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance as of October 2017.<sup>83</sup> Payment rates were increased for providers with ratings of three stars or higher in the state's quality rating and improvement system (which has five star levels) serving children birth through age two in tier three counties and for providers with ratings of three stars or higher serving school-age children in tier one and tier two counties.<sup>84</sup> The budget also included an additional \$9 million in FY 2017-18 and \$18.3 million in FY 2018-19 to expand the state prekindergarten program (with \$6 million in FY 2017-19 and \$12.2 million in FY 2018-19 coming from the TANF block grant).<sup>85</sup> The additional funding will allow an estimated 1,725 more children in FY 2017-18 and 3,525 more children in FY 2018-19 to participate in the program.<sup>86</sup> The budget provided \$3.5 million in FY 2017-18 and \$7 million in FY 2018-19 to Smart Start to fully implement Dolly Parton's Imagination Library statewide as well.<sup>87</sup> In addition, the budget increased funding for the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program by \$2 million in each year of the biennium.<sup>88</sup>



- **Oklahoma**, which made significant funding cuts to most agencies following a large drop in state revenues, reduced funding for child care assistance by \$4 million.<sup>89</sup> Following this funding cut, the state had expected it would need to implement a freeze on enrollment in the child care assistance program,<sup>90</sup> but as of December 2017, the state had not yet instituted such a freeze.<sup>91</sup> The state also reduced funding for the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness/Smart Start Oklahoma by 45 percent.<sup>92</sup> An additional \$2.5 million was directed to the Early Childhood Initiative, which supports programs for early learning, struggling readers, and new educators.<sup>93</sup>
- **Oregon** provided \$11.3 million less in state general funds for the child care assistance program in the 2017-19 budget than in the 2015-17 budget (which had added \$45 million in state general funds for child care).<sup>94</sup> As a result, the state began placing families applying for child care assistance on a waiting list as of October 2017.<sup>95</sup> Funding was also reduced by \$2 million (11 percent) for Early Learning Hubs, which operate in 16 regions of the state to coordinate early learning services and family supports, and by \$400,000 (4 percent) for the Early Learning Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation Fund, which supports models for aligning early learning and K-12 education.<sup>96</sup> However, despite a \$1.8 billion state budget deficit, there were no cuts to state funding for Early Head Start, Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten, or Preschool Promise, and funding for early intervention and early childhood special education was increased by \$6 million.<sup>97</sup>
- **Pennsylvania's** FY 2017-18 budget restored \$20 million in funding for the child care services appropriation (which supports child care assistance for low-income families and child care quality improvement initiatives) that had been cut in the FY 2016-17 budget, bringing total funding back to \$155.7 million. State funding for child care assistance for families receiving or transitioning from TANF or receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits was reduced by \$12.7 million, to \$139.9 million, but prior year funding and increased federal support will be used to make up the difference so that no children will lose child care assistance as a result of the cut. Funding for the state prekindergarten program, Pre-K Counts, was increased by \$25 million, to \$172.3 million, and state funding for Head Start was increased by \$5 million, to \$54.2 million. In addition, the budget included a \$4.8 million increase in state funding for a new home visiting initiative within the existing Community-Based Family Centers line item, while maintaining funding for the Parents As Teachers model as well as the nearly \$12 million appropriation for the Nurse-Family Partnerships home visiting program. The state also provided an additional \$19 million in funding for early intervention services for children under age three and children ages three to five, bringing total state funding to \$400.4 million.<sup>98</sup>
- **Rhode Island's** final FY 2018 budget increased funding for the state prekindergarten program by \$1.1 million, to a total of \$6.2 million in state funding. The budget also increased state funding for Head Start by \$390,000, to a total of \$1.2 million in state funding. However, the budget did not include \$1 million proposed by Governor Gina Raimondo to support payment rate enhancements for child care providers serving infants and toddlers and meeting higher quality standards. The state made permanent a policy—initially put into effect in 2013 as a pilot program—that allows families already receiving child care assistance whose incomes exceed the initial eligibility limit of 180 percent of poverty to remain eligible for assistance up to an income of 225 percent of poverty. In addition, the state amended its home visiting legislation to require the state's Department of Health to produce an annual estimate of the number of children born to families with significant risk factors and to provide a funding plan to gradually expand home visiting programs to all vulnerable families.<sup>99</sup>
- **Texas** enacted legislation to prohibit out-of-school suspensions for students in prekindergarten through second grade, except in limited situations (such as if a student brings a weapon or drugs to school) and to encourage supports for teachers and students instead of suspensions. In addition, the state expanded eligibility for the state's prekindergarten program to children of fallen or seriously injured first responders. The legislature also approved legislation to create a teacher certification covering early childhood through third grade as an alternative to the existing certification covering early childhood through sixth grade. However, the state eliminated funding for a high-quality prekindergarten grant program that was established in 2015 and that provided \$118 million to school districts in 2016-17. Despite eliminating this funding, the state is still requiring all districts to meet the grant program's high-quality standards for prekindergarten using their existing resources.<sup>100</sup>





- **Vermont's** FY 2018 budget provided an additional \$2.5 million for child care. This increase included \$2.2 million for a new grant program for providers participating in the state's quality rating and improvement system, focusing on those providers caring for infants and toddlers and having a high percentage of their enrolled children receiving child care assistance. The increase also included \$300,000 to allow the state's income eligibility limit for child care assistance, and the income brackets for determining copayment levels, to be adjusted for the 2017 federal poverty level (so that a family does not lose eligibility for assistance or have its copayment increased simply because the family's income keeps pace with inflation).<sup>101</sup>
- **Washington** provided an additional \$37.8 million for its state prekindergarten program, which will support 1,800 new (mostly full-day) slots, including 800 in the first year and 1,000 in the second year, and a 6 percent increase in per-child funding. The state also provided \$21 million to support a 6 percent increase in base payment rates for child care centers serving families receiving child care assistance, and \$15.1 million to support provisions of a collective bargaining agreement for family child care providers, including a 2 percent increase in base payment rates for licensed family child care providers, an increase in payment rates for license-exempt family child care providers, improved health care benefits, needs-based grants, and professional development funds. However, in a step that could affect families' access to child care assistance, the state began developing rules that will require parents applying for assistance to provide the name of the noncustodial parent unless there is good cause not to do so. In addition, the state reduced funding for its quality rating and improvement system, Early Achievers, by \$12 million.<sup>102</sup>

The state established and provided \$82 million in start-up funding for a new paid family and medical leave insurance program that will provide benefits beginning January 1, 2020. Under this program, eligible workers will be able to receive up to 12 weeks of paid leave following the birth of a child or placement of a child who is under the age of 18, or when the worker or the worker's family member has a serious health condition, or in the case of certain military assignments. Employees are eligible for family and medical leave benefits after working for at least 820 hours during the qualifying period. Employees receive a percentage of their average weekly wages, with a maximum weekly benefit amount of \$1,000 (adjusted annually) and a minimum weekly benefit of \$100 per week (unless the employee's average wage at the time of the leave is less than \$100 per week). The benefit will be funded by a premium paid by employers and employees, with an initial premium rate of 0.4 percent of wages beginning on January 1, 2019; employers may deduct from their employees' wages 100 percent of the premiums due for the family leave and up to 45 percent of the premiums due for the medical leave portion.<sup>103</sup>

- **Wisconsin's** final FY 2017-19 budget provided \$289.2 million for child care assistance in 2017-18, an increase of \$8.5 million over the 2016-17 funding level, and \$310.4 million in 2018-19, an increase of \$29.6 million over the 2016-17 funding level. The additional funding will be used to allow families receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it for a full 12 months and to allow families to remain eligible with incomes above the initial eligibility cutoff of 200 percent of poverty. However, the state implemented a new policy requiring families to demonstrate they have less than \$25,000 in savings, excluding retirement accounts and the value of a car or house, in order to qualify for child care assistance. The state increased funding for child care quality improvement by just \$200,000 (1 percent), leaving few resources for raising provider payment rates, expanding professional development, or supporting new quality initiatives. The budget increased funding for the Family Foundations Home Visiting program by \$3.9 million in each year of the biennium.<sup>104</sup>



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