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STATE CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION UPDATES 2022:

PROGRESS ON A LONG PATH

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About This Report

This information in this report was gathered from state child care advocates' emails and other communications, materials available on state child care advocacy organization's websites, and the National Conference of State Legislatures Early Care and Education Bill Tracking database.[1] A preliminary draft of the report was sent to state child care advocates to review, verify, and update. The authors are very grateful to the state child care advocates who shared and verified the information included in this report.

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Introduction

Child care and early education are essential to children's learning and development, parents' ability to work or obtain training and education, and our economy's growth. Yet, the country's child care and early education system is under tremendous strain—families struggle to find and afford high-quality early care and education, and child care workers struggle with low wages. While the federal government has a key role to play in supporting child care and early education, states can also act to fill the significant gaps that remain by investing their own resources and developing innovative policies that can offer models for the nation to follow.

In 2022, many states allocated funding and resources, and/or adopted policies, with the goal of expanding families' access to child care and early childhood education opportunities. Many states have also made investments and implemented policies to help support child care and early learning providers. By increasing wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities for the workforce, states are aiming to boost recruitment, increase retention rates, reduce burnout, and improve the quality of early care and education. In addition, numerous states made investments in prekindergarten programs to serve more children and enhance quality. A few states have implemented or expanded paid parental leave programs, allowing parents to take time away from work to bond and care for new children entering their household. Some of the state progress this year was supported by temporary federal relief funds provided to sustain the child care system during the coronavirus pandemic; however, this report primarily focuses on states that supplemented federal relief with their own funds—or in a few cases, adopted particularly notable policies or initiatives with the support of federal relief dollars.

These new investments, policy changes, and implementation activities occurring throughout the country are an important start to ensuring that more children, families, and early care and education providers have access to the support systems needed to thrive. However, not all states had successes this year; several states missed opportunities to increase funding or made policy changes that could reduce the quality of care. And while many states have made substantial progress, an accessible, affordable, high-quality child care and early education system that works for all children, families, and early care and education providers will only be possible with further significant, long-term investments and policy improvements both on the state and national levels.

State Updates

Alabama lawmakers approved the first-ever state investment in child care (beyond the required state match for federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funding), along with a 10th consecutive annual increase in state funding for prekindergarten. Overall, these investments total $40 million, including $17.8 million to enhance Alabama Quality Stars, the state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), and the coaching, support, and assessment it offers to help child care programs improve and demonstrate quality; and $22.5 million for the state's prekindergarten program, First Class Pre-K, enabling the program to add 125 more prekindergarten classrooms and increase the percentage of the state's 4-year-olds reached from 42 percent to 45 percent.[2] Alabama advocates also defeated a state Senate bill that would have revised the requirements for criminal background checks for child care providers and lowered the age of employment to 16 years of age for calculations of child-staff ratios. These changes would have weakened the health and safety regulations put in place with the passage of Alabama's Child Care Safety Act in 2018.

Additionally, Alabama used federal temporary relief funding through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to create a Child Care Workforce Stabilization Grant (CCWS), which provides quarterly bonus payments of up to $1,500 to eligible child care staff as a means of staff retention and recruitment in order to strengthen the child care workforce. In July 2022, the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) announced the size of bonus payments in the CCWS grants would be doubled. In May 2022, Alabama DHR announced round four of the Temporary Assistance for Stabilizing Child Care (TASCC) grant, in which licensed child care providers would receive $1,000 per child according to the provider's licensed, daytime capacity. The new TASCC grant will help programs cover base payroll costs—so that programs can meet CCWS grant requirements that they not reduce employee wages or benefits or furlough paid employees while applying for and receiving the grant—as well as other ongoing pandemic-related needs.[3]

Alaska enacted the Alaska Reads Act (House Bill 114), which created four new programs within the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED): universal, voluntary prekindergarten, a reading intervention program for kindergarten through grade 3, a school improvement reading program, and a virtual education consortium. Beginning on July 1, 2023, school districts with existing high-quality early education programs will be eligible for state funding as part of the base student allocation (BSA) for students age 4 and above (at half the rate of a full-time-equivalent student). For the first time since 2016, the base student allocation for kindergarten through grade 12 students increased by $30 per student to $5,960, making the prekindergarten allocation $2,980 per student. For low-performing districts without existing or high-quality early education, up to $3 million additional per year will be available in the form of time-limited grants for the local design and development of high-quality, culturally responsive prekindergarten programs. This legislation is scheduled to sunset in FY 2034.

In addition to the Alaska Reads Act, the FY 2023 state operating budget provides $5.7 million for prekindergarten grants (increased from $2 million in FY 2022) and $8.2 million for early learning coordination. The FY 2023 state capital budget appropriated $1 million to the Alaska Child Care Program Office to support activities related to quality and access as part of Alaska's Child Care Development Plan.[4]

Arizona's child care advocates successfully blocked House Bill 2451, which would have changed the child-staff ratios in child care facilities by allowing volunteers at child care facilities to be counted as staff in child-staff ratios, despite volunteers not being required to have the same level of training as staff.

In addition, under House Bill 2111, funding was designated for Healthy Families Arizona, a nationally accredited, evidence-based voluntary home visiting program for new parents. The funding will fill a gap that has existed since 2009, when funding was drastically cut, and allow the program to serve an additional 1,500 families.[5]

Arkansas did not have a full legislative session this year, but the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education have been almost entirely obligated. In addition to obligating funds for operational, quality improvement, expansion, and sustainability grants directed at programs and centers, the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program was greatly expanded in the state.

Additionally, the state legislature approved a task force to study mental health and behavioral health in the state; a working group under this task force is focused on early intervention and prevention, and has had discussions about child care settings and the early childhood workforce.[6]

California's final budget for FY 2022–2023 includes $1.09 billion for child care assistance to annualize the 2021–2022 Budget Act's 120,000 new slots and further increase the number of new slots to 145,000, with the continued goal from the 2021–2022 Budget Act to serve 200,000 more children by 2025–2026; $136 million to provide cost-of-living adjustments to provider payment rates for the child care assistance program; $100.2 million for agreements between the state and the Child Care Providers Union, which represents home-based providers, to provide health care benefits and other supports to union members; $100.5 million in one-time federal funds to increase the 2021–22 Budget Act investment in the Department of Social Services Child Care Infrastructure program for child care facility renovation and repair; and $113.6 million in state and federal funds to continue basing payments to providers serving families receiving child care assistance based on families' certified need—rather than children's actual attendance—until June 30, 2023.[7] California extended the waiver of parent copayments for the child care assistance program until June 30, 2023.[8]

In addition, the final budget expands eligibility for the California State Preschool Program by guaranteeing 24 months of early learning and care to all 3- and 4-year-old children with exceptional needs and expanding eligibility to all families with incomes at or below 100 percent of the state median, while increasing payment rates for preschool providers serving 3-year-olds, children with exceptional needs, and dual language learners. The budget provides $300 million for the California Prekindergarten Planning and Implementation Grant program to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in expanding access to classroom-based prekindergarten programs; $18.3 million to establish the California Universal Preschool Planning Grant Program to expand access to preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds through a mixed-delivery system; and $250 million for the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program to support LEAs in developing inclusive practices and programs in early learning programs.[9]

The final budget also includes steps to expand the early care and education workforce—for example, by increasing the capacity of teacher residency programs and authorizing and incentivizing the development of an integrated childhood education specialist credential and baccalaureate degree programs at the California State University and partnering institutions of higher education. However, the budget does not include the more robust measures supported by state advocates to boost the workforce through higher wages, better benefits, expanded professional development opportunities, and accessible career pipelines.[10]

Colorado enacted House Bill 22-1295, which establishes the duties of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and its executive director by relocating almost all early childhood programs from the Departments of Human Services and Education.[11] The legislation also creates the state's universal preschool program, which will go into effect at the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year.

In addition, the state enacted Senate Bill 22-213, which appropriates flexible ARPA dollars to increase access to high-quality child care, strengthen the early childhood workforce, and support parents and providers. Among other provisions, the legislation directs $15 million for an early care and education recruitment and retention grant and scholarship program and $1 million for a home visiting program. The legislation also provides $7.5 million for a family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) training and support program—through which community-based organizations and nonprofit organizations that have expertise working with FFN providers will provide them with information, training, and technical assistance to support best practices—and creates an FFN advisory group to advise the department on the needs of FFN providers and to make recommendations on changes to regulations, policies, funding, and procedures that would benefit the FFN community.

Lastly, the state approved House Bill 22-1010, which established a refundable income tax credit for all eligible early childhood educators.[12]

Connecticut provided $184 million in funds in the biennium budget adjustment to support early care and education; these funds include approximately $80 million in newly appropriated funding for the Office of Early Childhood, one-time carry-over funding, and federal ARPA funding. Of these funds, $25 million in general funding will go toward increasing payment rates for infant and toddler care in the child care assistance program from $8,500 to $13,500 per year and creating 1,300 new infant and toddler spaces; and $70 million in state funds will be used to supplement wages of all types of employed child care providers (including center-based providers and family child care providers, whether state-funded or private-pay). The new initiative, Wage Supports for Early Childhood Educators, will be used to give child care providers a one-time bonus check of up to $1,000.[13]

Connecticut is establishing the Start Early – Early Child Development Initiative to grow and enhance high-quality early childhood care, education, and support services; funding may include targeted formula grants to providers in high-need areas throughout the state to serve a cohort of children from infancy through kindergarten entrance. The state also approved state bonding authority for grants-in-aid for constructing, improving, or equipping child care centers. Finally, the state increased its earned income tax credit from 30.5 to 41.5 percent and created a temporary child tax credit.[14]

Delaware enacted the Healthy Delaware Families Act (Senate Bill 1), creating a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program that provides employees up to 12 weeks of paid leave through the state's paid leave trust fund. In a two-year period, workers can take up to six weeks of leave to care for a family member (parent, child, or spouse) with a serious medical condition, address their own serious medical condition, or address the impact of a family member's military deployment. In a one-year period, workers can take up to 12 weeks of leave to care for a new child within one year of the birth, adoption, or foster placement of that child. While out on leave, workers will receive 80 percent of their wages (a maximum of $900 and a minimum of $100) each week through the state program. Employers will start making contributions to the trust fund in 2025, and employees will be able to start taking paid leave on January 1, 2026.[15]

In addition, the state approved $20 million to increase payment rates for providers serving families receiving child care assistance and has committed to cover all families eligible for assistance. The state also paid $1,000 bonuses to over 4,000 early care and education professionals and established a professional registry. The state increased prekindergarten funding by 50 percent ($3.7 million) as well.[16]

Lastly, the state approved legislation (House Substitute 1 for House Bill 377) that requires the Department of Education to conduct an annual workforce study of early care and education professionals.[17] This is foundational work that will provide information to be used in planning for future progress within the workforce.

District of Columbia's residing employees of early learning centers and homes, and employees' dependents, will be able to enroll in a silver-level health plan for free, regardless of citizenship status. All non-District of Columbia residents who work in a learning facility (centers and homes) within the District of Columbia will be able to enroll in a silver-level health plan for free or at reduced premiums, although their family members will not be eligible to receive benefits for free. Nonresidents are also eligible regardless of citizenship status.[18]

Florida's approved budget earmarked $52 million in recurring state funds to increase the base student allocation (BSA) by $317. In doing so, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) received the highest per-pupil funding increase since the program's inception in 2005–2006, to $2,803. The budget also included another $100 million for VPK programs that agree to raise VPK teachers' pay to a minimum of $15 an hour, adding another $618 to the BSA, for a total increase of $935 for VPK programs that agree to the $15-an-hour minimum for teacher pay.[19]

Additionally, the budget includes $156 million for the child care assistance (School Readiness) program. Early learning centers and family child care homes serving children in the School Readiness program will receive more funding per child for children ages zero to 5.[20] This will support raising educator salaries and help recruit new, high-quality providers.[21]

Georgia is investing $3.1 million to meet the state match for CCDBG, in order to maximize existing federal funds, and providing an additional $500,000 in state funds to support its child care assistance program.

The state also provided $19.4 million in state lottery funds to support a $2,000 increase in the base salary of both lead and assistant teachers in Georgia's prekindergarten program—a change from previous increases, which had left out prekindergarten assistant teachers, who received a base salary of $16,190.[22] The state is providing another $919,000 in general state funds for a similar $2,000 salary increase to teachers serving preschool-age children with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B program.[23]

Lastly, the final budget includes a $5,000 salary increase for all full-time state employees, which will aid in the recruitment and retention of staff at child-serving state agencies.[24]

Hawai'i restored funding for its Preschool Open Doors Program, after it had been cut by $7 million in the previous year's budget, as state budget shortfalls stemming from COVID-19 resulted in cuts to many programs; with that cut, the number of children served by the program had dropped from approximately 1,400 to 600. Hawaii also approved a measure allocating $200 million for the construction, expansion, or renovation of prekindergarten facilities across the state.

The state Department of Human Services will now collect data on the child care workforce, strengthening the state's Department's Early Childhood Workforce Registry, and make improvements to the platform. In addition, the state minimum wage will increase incrementally to $18 by 2028 and the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was made permanent and refundable.[25]

Idaho's legislature appropriated approximately $100 million in federal pandemic relief funds to support child care. The funding will be used to continue support for programs created at the height of the pandemic to mitigate the damage done to the child care industry and address parents' child care needs. These programs include facilities grants for early childhood business owners to pay for general operating costs, wage enhancements for early childhood staff, and expanded eligibility for child care assistance. These are temporary programs and current funding for these supports is set to expire at the end of the current fiscal year (the end of June 2023), unless the state legislature opts to continue funding.

The Idaho Legislature also approved, and provided $15 million in funding for, a new grant program to encourage and enable businesses and employer consortiums to create and develop on-site, or near-site, child care centers or partner with local and regional child care services to increase available slots for an employer's staff.[26]

Illinois appropriated nearly $65 million in new state general funds for its early care and education system, including $54.4 million allocated to preschools, center-based infant-toddler programs, and evidence-based home visiting services through the state's Early Childhood Block Grant (a 10 percent increase); $7 million in additional funding for the Early Intervention program (fully restoring funding that had been cut in the FY 2022 budget)—allowing a 3 percent increase in payment rates for early intervention providers; $1 million for home visiting services through the Department of Human Services; and $2 million for a newly created Off-Hours Child Care Program to help first responders and other workers identify and access nontraditional-hour care.[27]

In addition, the state enacted a measure that extends automatic eligibility for Illinois' Early Intervention program to infants and toddlers who are the subject of a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect[28] and extends automatic eligibility to the child care assistance program for parenting youth in care and families in the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Extended Family Support Program (EFSP).[29] The state also expanded its earned income tax credit benefit from 18 percent of the federal benefit to 20 percent.[30]

While the FY 2023 state budget does not increase state funding for the child care assistance program, the administration is making several improvements to the program, including increasing the income eligibility limit to qualify for assistance from 200 percent to 225 percent of poverty (and increasing the exit eligibility limit from 250 percent to 275 percent of poverty); continuing to provide three months of assistance for unemployed parents looking for work, through the end of 2022; expanding eligibility for assistance to parents and guardians participating in online courses at home[31]; lowering copayments for certain families receiving child care assistance (including families experiencing homelessness and families with parents working in child care); and raising provider payment rates by 8 percent.[32] With federal relief funds, the administration is continuing to extend financial supports for eligible child care centers, family child care homes, and group child care homes through the Strengthen and Grow Grants and Child Care Restoration Grants.[33] The administration is also investing $6 million in an early childhood education and care enrollment campaign.[34]

Indiana approved legislation that reconstitutes the Early Learning Advisory Committee and charges it with addressing growing shortages in the state's early care and education workforce, child care access and kindergarten readiness, and early education licensure requirements (House Enrolled Act 1093). The state also enacted legislation that prevents families who receive child care assistance from losing benefits due to a student household member earning income up to $15,000 through programming geared toward furthering their education/training (House Enrolled Act 1361).

In addition, the state enacted a measure that creates child care licensing exemptions for school corporations to align with existing school health and safety regulations and that defines child-staff ratios for Montessori Schools (House Enrolled Act 1318). The state closed background check loopholes for home child care providers as well (House Enrolled Act 1222).[35]

Iowa enacted legislation increasing the number of 2-year-olds that a worker at a child care center can supervise from six to seven and increasing the number of 3-year-olds per worker from eight to 10. In addition, the legislation permits 16- and 17-year-olds to work or substitute in child care centers without adult supervision if they are caring for school-age children; previously, center employees had to be at least 18 years old to work unsupervised.[36]

In addition, the state directed $7 million to Child Care WAGE$ IOWA, a project that provides education-based salary supplements, or bonuses, to low-paid early care and education providers working with children ages birth to 5 in regulated settings,[37] and T.E.A.C.H. scholarship programs for early educators. The state also allocated $1 million for Child Care Challenge grants, which are administered through the Iowa Department of Economic Development. These grants support regional and community projects to establish local child care facilities and increase the availability of quality, affordable child care.[38]

Kansas enacted legislation (House Bill 2237) that allows all businesses to apply to deduct from their state income taxes a portion of the expenses they incurred providing child care for employees or helping their employees pay for child care; a total of $3 million is available to be claimed. Previously, this tax credit was only available to large corporations and financial institutions, but now small businesses are included.[39] Additionally, the state will use federal CCDBG funds to provide a total of $53 million in bonus checks (ranging from $750 to $2,500 per person) to the approximately 23,000 employees who work in Kansas's licensed child care facilities.[40]

Kentucky approved a budget that increases payment rates for providers serving families receiving child care assistance by $2 per day; funds the newly created Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership program, which encourages employers to assist employees with the cost of child care by matching employer child care benefits with state dollars; fully funds full-day kindergarten; and provides sustained funding for the Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) in-home visiting program for new parents.[41]

With the help of the ARPA funds, Kentucky will begin awarding categorical eligibility for child care assistance to all employees who work in licensed and certified child care programs, regardless of their role.[42]

Louisiana's approved budget (House Resolution 1) provides $44 million in funding to improve early child care and education, including $25 million to expand the child care assistance program and approximately $18 million to increase payment rates for existing programs serving 4-year-olds. In addition, a supplemental funding measure (House Bill 406) provides $40 million in one-time funding for the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund to incentivize cities and parishes to invest in the expansion of high-quality care and education.[43] The regular budget and supplemental funding measure together also include $27 million to restore the Early Childhood Supports and Services program, which had last been in operation in 2011; the newly restored program will offer infant and early childhood mental health care, parent education, wraparound services, and developmental screenings statewide.[44]

The state enacted other legislative measures allowing certain parishes to repurpose juvenile justice funding to include preventative services for young children and their families, including early care and education (House Bill 460)[45]; requiring districts to work toward offering full-day, full-year prekindergarten to all 4-year-olds (Senate Bill 47)[46]; and instructing the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission to establish a task force to recommend strategies for alternative state and local funding for quality early care and education and early care and education workforce compensation and benefits (Senate Bill 169).[47]

In New Orleans, voters approved the Early Childhood Education proposition, which will generate $21.3 million annually from property taxes to provide access to high-quality early care and education for at least 1,000 infants and toddlers per year as well as funding for professional development, center start-up and expansion, evaluation, and coordinated enrollment and outreach to families.[48]

Maine enacted measures providing general fund dollars for several early care and education programs and initiatives, including $12.1 million to create a wage supplement program for early childhood educators (Legislative Document 1995); $5.2 million to support the construction, renovation, and expansion of child care facilities (Legislative Document 1995); $2.9 million to expand public preschool; $1.4 million to expand the state's Early Childhood Consultation Partnership program, which offers support, education, and consultation on infant and early childhood mental health to early care and education teachers and providers (Legislative Document 533); and $1 million to expand Maine's home visiting program, Parents as Teachers (Legislative Document 1995).[49]

Maryland enacted the Time to Care Act of 2022, guaranteeing nearly all employees in the state the right to up to 12 weeks of paid, job-protected leave to bond with a new child, care for a seriously ill loved one, deal with their own serious health needs, or address needs in connection with military deployment.[50] The legislation covers nearly all employees, regardless of employer size, including full-time and part-time workers and private- and public-sector workers. It ensures the right of employees to return to their jobs following leave (with very limited exceptions) and retain their health insurance during leave. Employees taking leave will receive up to 90 percent of their wages on a sliding scale, with lower-income workers receiving the highest portion of their wages; weekly benefits will initially range from $50 to $1,000 and will be adjusted in subsequent years for inflation. The benefits will be funded through an insurance system into which both employers and employees contribute (with employers that have fewer than 15 employees exempt from mandated contributions to the insurance fund, though their employees remain eligible for benefits).[51]

In addition, the state enacted a package of measures to make child care assistance more accessible by establishing presumptive eligibility for applicants for child care assistance, pending final determination; removing the requirement that applicants pursue child support enforcement; eliminating copayments for parents enrolled in certain safety net programs (such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC); mandating prompt payments for providers; and requiring streamlining of the child care assistance application.[52]

The state also approved $10 million in new state funding for child care assistance; $2 million for the elimination of copayments for some families as specified in the child care package; $16 million for hiring and retention bonuses of $1,000 to support the child care workforce; $53.2 million in state funds for child care stabilization grants targeting providers whose financial hardship puts them at risk of closure and who have not previously received federally funded grants; $25 million (in FY 2023 and FY 2024 combined) for a child care facilities loan fund to support no-interest loans for expenses related to the acquisition, expansion, renovation, and new construction of child care facilities; and $4.7 million for infant and early childhood mental health programs.[53]

Finally, the state increased funding for early childhood programs supported by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, by $125.6 million, including increases of $90.4 million for the state prekindergarten program; $14.7 million for Judith P. Hoyer Center Early Learning Hubs ("Judy Centers"); $4.5 million for Family Support (or "Patty") Centers; $4.3 million for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (which provides early intervention services for young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families under Part C of IDEA); and $11.7 million for child care professional development support.[54]

Massachusetts' final FY 2023 state budget includes $250 million in Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Stabilization Grants to support the early education and care workforce and other operational costs related to the pandemic; $60 million to increase payment rates for child care providers; $25 million for a new early education and care infrastructure and policy reform reserve fund to bolster the statewide system of early care and education, assist families in navigating that system, and help early educators with costs associated with personal child care; $15 million for preschool expansion in the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative; $15 million for child care resource and referral agencies; and $3.5 million for early childhood mental health.[55] The budget also allocates $175 million for a new High-Quality Early Education and Care Affordability Fund. In addition, the budget includes language continuing the policy of paying child care programs for the child care assistance program based on enrollment (rather than children's attendance).

The state enacted legislation requiring the state to develop performance standards necessary for prohibiting or significantly limiting the use of suspension and expulsion in all licensed early education and care programs.[56]

Michigan committed $100 million to support 1,000 new or expanded child care programs across the state by the end of 2024. This amount includes $51.5 million in funding to support identifying and renovating facilities; $23 million in start-up funding to support newly licensed programs; over $11.4 million to support the recruitment, training, and retainment of early education staff; and $14.3 million in business development tools to assess market demand, create business plans with child care providers, and ensure the start-up and licensing process is straightforward and more efficient.[57]

These investments complement an increase in the income limit for child care assistance to 200 percent of poverty—which made over 150,000 more children eligible for assistance[58]—and a recent increase in payment rates for providers serving families receiving assistance.

Michigan is also piloting a tri-share model where the cost of child care is shared equally by an eligible employee, their employer, and the state, with coordination provided by a designated facilitator hub in multiple regions across the state.[59]

Finally, the FY 2023 School Aid Budget provides $34 million in additional funding for the Great Start Readiness Program (the state preschool program) to increase funding per child from $8,700 to $9,150 for a full-day program and from $4,350 to $4,575 for a part-day program.[60]

Nebraska's legislature approved a spending bill for federal funding that includes $4 million to expand or start child care programs in communities across the state. Federal funds were also allocated to increase provider payment rates for the child care assistance program to the 75th percentile of market rates (the federally recommended level). In addition, the state approved measures recommending maternal depression screenings during perinatal care and well-child visits; requiring the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Children and Family Services to notify the Division of Public Health of any alleged out-of-home child abuse or neglect by a licensed child care provider; and adding early childhood programs to the state's farm-to-school program, which will support early childhood programs in connecting with local farms to get fresh, healthy food for the children they serve.

Legislation seeking $15 million in funding to support the cost of health insurance premiums for quality early childhood providers was introduced but failed to make it out of committee; instead, an interim study (a study conducted annually after the legislature adjourns its session) was introduced to explore potential solutions to the issue of health insurance for child care providers. State senators also plan to conduct interim studies to examine severe maternal morbidity, home visitation, and the process for determining provider payment rates for the child care assistance program.[61]

New Hampshire enacted Senate Bill 446, which initially included establishing a child care workforce fund and grant program, but was compromised down to directing the Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Child Care Advisory Council, to submit to plan to the governor for economic relief and recovery relative to fostering sustainable child care opportunities within the state.[62]

New Jersey's final FY 2023–2024 budget includes $28 million for Thriving by Three, an initiative aimed at developing more high-quality care for infants and toddlers in low-income areas and areas with a limited supply of care; $30 million for the Economic Development Authority to build on their Child Care Facilities Improvement Program; $68 million for preschool expansion, targeting new school districts; and $20 million for home visiting programs, split between a new universal home visitation program and existing home visiting programs. In addition, under the approved budget, the state will continue paying providers serving families receiving child care assistance based on enrollment, rather attendance, until the end of 2023; this policy was previously set to expire in August 2022. The state also enacted a refundable Young Child Tax Credit of up to $500 per year for families that have children under age 5 and that earn less than $80,000 per year.[63]

New Mexico expanded eligibility for child care assistance to families earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level and will waive copayments for all families receiving child care assistance through June 2023. The state will also dedicate $10 million for grants to expand the availability of child care in communities where it is needed most; this pilot round of supply-building grants will add capacity for up to 800 more children around the state. In addition, the state initiated a new stipend program that pays up to $2,000 per semester to early childhood professionals who are currently enrolled in early childhood degree programs at one of the state's institutions of higher education.[64]

The state legislature advanced, and voters approved (with 70 percent of the vote),[65] a constitutional amendment that will allow for an increased withdrawal from the Land Grant Permanent Fund, the state's $26 billion endowment based on natural resource extraction royalties and market investments, with 60 percent of the new withdrawal going to early childhood education. With the approval of the amendment, the withdrawal from the fund will be increased from 5 percent of its average five-year balance, which now goes primarily to K–12 education, to 6.25 percent.[66] New Mexico also approved a new state-level refundable child tax credit of up to $175 per child.[67]

New York expanded the income eligibility limit for child care assistance from 200 percent to 300 percent of the federal poverty level; this change is expected to make 250,000 children newly eligible for child care assistance. The state also capped copayments for families receiving child care assistance at 10 percent of their income over the federal poverty level; increased payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance from the 69th to the 80th percentile of market rates; and removed the work requirement for post-secondary students as a condition of receiving child care assistance.

In addition, the state invested $343 million to continue stabilization funds for child care providers, with 75 percent of the funds to be used for workforce initiatives, and $125 million in prekindergarten to support expanding access to children in communities without universal prekindergarten. The state also made modifications to requirements that often are used to exclude family child care providers and some center-based programs from participating in the state's universal prekindergarten program.

New York made a one-time supplemental Empire State Child Credit payment and earned income tax credit (EITC) payment for those receiving the state child tax credit and state EITC for the 2021 tax year. The state child tax credit supplemental is equal to 100 percent of the current credit for families with federal adjusted gross income less than $10,000, incrementally scaling down to a supplemental equal to 25 percent of the current credit for families with federal adjusted gross income equal to or greater than $50,000. (The maximum credit is $330 per child). Notably, the state child care tax credit only applies to children age 4 through 17, and children under age 4 remain excluded from the credit. The New York EITC supplemental payment is equal to 25 percent of the current credit.

Finally, New York City included in its budget a $10 million fund to make child care assistance available to children regardless of immigration status.[68]

North Carolina's FY 2022–2023 state budget included $9 million in additional recurring funds to increase payment rates for the North Carolina Prekindergarten Early Learning program, with the intention of supporting teacher salaries. With the additional investment, payment rates for the prekindergarten program saw a total increase of 9 percent for the biennium. A portion of these funds will also be used to raise payment rates for public school and Head Start programs by 5 percent.

The state budget reallocates a portion of the federal ARPA child care funding that was originally allocated for child care assistance slots in the 2021 budget to temporarily increase payment rates for the child care assistance program to at least the 75th percentile of 2018 market rates until funds expire in September 2024.[69]

North Dakota did not have a regular legislative session in 2022, but policymakers made decisions on how the approximately $1 billion in state ARPA funds would be spent during a special legislative session in November 2021. Policymakers approved $7.8 million in one-time funding to expand eligibility for child care assistance to 85 percent of state median income through FY 2025, making 600 more children eligible for assistance. The state also approved a $9.6 million investment to fund a pilot public-private partnership that offers a state match to employers that fund child care stipends for their employees; about 1,000 working parents will benefit from this initiative.[70]

Ohio, which is in the first year of a two-year legislative session of the state biennial budget process, increased its initial eligibility limit for its child care assistance program (Publicly Funded Child Care) from 135 percent to 142 percent of the federal poverty level in the State FY 2022–2023 budget. The budget measure also established the Legislative Study Committee on Publicly Funded Child Care and Step Up to Quality, Ohio's quality rating and improvement system; the study committee will meet through June 2023. Additionally, Ohio distributed its $799 million in ARPA Child Care Stabilization Grants in three phases, the third of which began July 1, 2022; these funds will be available to child care providers through September 2024.[71]

Oregon approved $26 million to increase payment rates to providers serving children receiving child care assistance; $39.3 million to recruit and train new child care providers and provide direct grants to expand existing facilities of all types; $21 million for direct relief payments of $500 each to currently working early learning and care providers, with one payment in 2022 and another in 2023; and $3.6 million for the Department of Early Learning and Care. The state also provided $2 million for Healthy Families Oregon, a free, voluntary home visiting program offering support and education to families who are expecting or parenting newborns, and $2 million for Relief Nurseries, which aim to maximize family resilience and prevent the abuse and neglect of young children; these funding increases will support wage increases for both programs.[72]

Pennsylvania's FY 2022–2023 state budget included $60 million in additional funding for the state's Prekindergarten Counts program, which will be used to serve over 2,900 more children and raise payment rates for providers[73]; $19 million in additional funding for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program; $25 million for the child care assistance program to increase the exit eligibility limit (the income limit up to which families already receiving assistance can continue to do so) to 300 percent of poverty or the state median income (whichever is lower) for families already in the program (with the income limit to initially qualify for assistance remaining at 200 percent of poverty)[74]; and $90 million in federal funding to provide one-time child care staff recruitment and retention bonuses of $1,000 or $2,500.[75]

The state budget also provides $24 million in new funds for home visiting services, including $15 million in additional funding for evidence-based home visiting through Community-Based Family Centers, allowing 3,800 more families to be served; an additional $1 million for Nurse-Family Partnerships to serve 200 more low-income, first-time mothers; and $8 million in one-time funds under the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention program that are being directed to home visiting services. In addition, the budget includes $9.3 million for the Early Intervention Part C (infants and toddlers) program and $10 million for the Early Intervention Part B (preschool-age) program.[76]

The state also created the Pennsylvania Child Care Tax Credit, modeled on the federal credit, which will be refundable.[77] Families can receive up to $180 for one child or $360 for two or more children if their household earns above $43,000 or up to $315 for one child or $630 for two or more children if their household earns less than $43,000.[78]

Rhode Island increased the income limit to initially qualify for child care assistance from 180 percent of poverty ($41,454 a year for a family of three) to 200 percent of poverty ($46,060 a year for a family of three) and increased the exit eligibility limit from 225 percent of poverty ($51,817 a year for a family of three) to 300 percent of poverty ($69,090 a year for a family of three). The state also increased payment rates for child care providers so that they range from the 50th percentile to the 80th percentile of 2021 market rates, with programs at the four- and five-star level of the state's quality rating and improvement system meeting or exceeding the federally recommended level (the 75th percentile of current market rates); maintained a cap of 7 percent of income on copayments for families receiving child care assistance; made permanent eligibility for child care assistance for low-income college students enrolled at Rhode Island public higher education institutions; and provided funds for a child care licensing information technology system.

In addition, the state allocated ARPA funds to offer start-up grants to incentivize providers to open new licensed family child care homes; provide quality improvement grants for licensed child care centers and family child care homes; fund a second year of retention bonuses for educators and direct care staff at licensed child care centers and family child care homes; expand the state's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood workforce development model to help more early educators earn post-secondary credentials and degrees; and develop an early educator workforce registry.[79]

The state increased the payment rate for Early Intervention (Part C of Idea) services for children receiving Medicaid by 45 percent and provided a temporary increase for the First Connections Home Visiting Program.[80] In addition, the state allocated $5.5 million in ARPA funding for Early Intervention Recovery to address the decline in enrollment for Early Intervention, family home visiting, and screening programs by offering performance bonuses for providers who hit certain targets, such as recovering referral numbers and achieving reduced staff turnover. Finally, Rhode Island approved a one-time-only child tax credit of $250 per child for up to three children for individuals making $100,000 a year or less or couples making $200,000 a year or less.[81]

South Carolina enacted legislation creating paid parental leave for state employees, effective October 1, 2022. Eligible state employees who give birth are entitled to six weeks of paid parental leave. In cases of adoption, the primary care parent is entitled to six weeks of paid leave and the co-parent is entitled to two weeks of paid leave. Other eligible state employees who do not give birth, including foster parents, are entitled to receive two weeks of paid parental leave. During paid leave, eligible employees receive 100 percent of their base pay; part-time eligible employees receive pay on a prorated basis corresponding to the percentage of hours they are normally scheduled to work.[82]

In addition, South Carolina's FY 2022–23 state budget included $3 million in recurring funds for county-level public-private partnerships, through a new line item titled Every Child Ready (Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth). This expansion is the single largest increase in recurring funds to these partnerships since inception. The funds will prioritize evidence-based programs for children birth through age 3 who live in rural communities and in communities where kindergarten readiness scores are consistently below the state average.[83]

Tennessee approved a measure (Senate Bill 2563/House Bill 1890) that makes prekindergarten part of the state's definition of elementary schools, which will make prekindergarten eligible for some federal spending, if a local education agency chooses to use the funds for this purpose. Another measure (Senate Bill 2595/House Bill 2709) clarified that local education agencies have the flexibility to determine which students may fill empty seats in the Voluntary Prekindergarten program once they have served economically disadvantaged 4-year-olds; local education agencies can decide whether to serve 4-year-olds with other risk factors, any 4-year-olds, or economically disadvantaged 3-year-olds.[84]

The Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement Act (TISA) passed, which updated the kindergarten-to-grade-12 public education funding model for the first time in 30 years. Alongside an additional $1 billion in funding for public education, TISA's student-centered approach recognizes and supports the specific needs of each child. As part of this approach, TISA adds new funding for school nurses and counselors in the base funding amount for all students and includes funding weights for students who are economically disadvantaged or have unique learning needs.

Also, following legislation approved in the 2021 session overhauling the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the Tennessee Department of Human Services awarded TANF grants totaling $175 million to seven collaborative groups across the state to implement innovative, community-centered pilot programs to support low-income families; the funding comes from TANF surplus funds that had gone unspent for a number of years.[85]

Finally, the Tennessee Child Care Task Force, which was created as a result of 2021 legislation, is developing a strategic plan that will better ensure Tennessee's working families can access quality, affordable child care. The task force is scheduled to present recommendations by the end of 2022.[86]

Utah enacted a measure (House Bill 15) that allows a community reinvestment agency to use the agency's housing allocation to pay for the expansion of child care facilities within the agency's boundaries. The measure also prohibits localities from enacting child care regulations that are stricter than the state's and increases the number of children a family child care provider may care for without being required to be certified from five to six.[87]

Vermont's budget includes $7 million in retention bonuses for teachers and staff working in regulated child care programs; $4.9 million for the state's child care assistance program to raise payment rates for providers and to expand the number of days children can be absent from care or programs can be closed without a reduction in payment to the provider; $800,000 to increase child care capacity for infants and toddlers; and $100,000 to support high school students interested in careers in early childhood education through the state's pre-apprenticeship program.

In addition, Vermont provided $3.44 million to expand the state's child and dependent care credit, allowing a refundable tax credit equivalent to 72 percent of the federal credit for all Vermont families paying out-of-pocket for care.

The legislature also authorized funding for the child care system financing study outlined in House Bill 171/Act 45, legislation passed in 2021 that laid the foundation for work toward a child care system in which no Vermont family spends more than 10 percent of its income on child care, early childhood educators are fairly compensated, and all children birth to 5 have equitable access to high-quality programs that meet their needs. Finally, the legislature directed the state's Department for Children and Families to work with stakeholders to redesign Vermont's early childhood education quality improvement system.[88]

Virginia's final budget for FY 2023–2024 provides a total of $76 million in additional state funds and an additional $7.5 million in ARPA funding for child care and early education. With the new funding for child care, the state increased the income eligibility limit for child care assistance for families with children under age 5 to 85 percent of state median; began allowing families to qualify for child care assistance while searching for a job; reduced copayments for families receiving child care assistance; and eliminated the 72-month time limit on receiving assistance.

The new expenditures for early education include $6.7 million to expand public-private options for state-aligned preschools through the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, allowing an estimated additional 500 to 600 students, including 200 infants and toddlers, to be served. The budget also supports an increase in the per-pupil allocation for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) to $8,359 and includes language calling for annual benchmarking of VPI funding, as is done with other K–12 funding streams. In addition, budget language allows school divisions more flexibility to use VPI funds to serve additional students with disabilities and to serve 3-year-olds in VPI-funded programs.

The additional child care and early education funding also includes an additional $5 million per year to expand the early educator incentive grant program to help recruit and retain early childhood professionals[89]; a $2.9 million increase each year to the base allocation for early intervention (Part C) services for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays; $3.5 million in ARPA funds to the United Way of Southwest Virginia for a new initiative expanding child care capacity; and $4 million in ARPA federal funds to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers in offering before- and after-school programs. The state enacted legislation allowing home-based child care programs to be approved on the site of rental properties as well.[90]

Finally, the state approved a refundable state tax credit for low-income working families who qualify for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); these families will be able to receive a state refund equal to 15 percent of their federal EITC.[91]

Washington's legislature added funding for the 2021 Fair Start for Kids Act, which will result in significant expansion for child care assistance and allocations to support enhanced rates for child care providers delivering high-quality early learning and child care. The funding also supports infant and early mental health consultation, the Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregiver program statewide, and a limited expansion for Transitional Kindergarten. However, a Superior Court judge in Douglas County struck down the capital gains tax that the legislature had passed in 2021 and that supports funding for the Fair Start for Kids Act, which will necessitate a search for new funding streams.

In addition, the state approved funding to cover background checks and fingerprinting processing fees that newly hired child care workers must submit before going to work. The state also approved a measure (Senate Bill 5793) that will provide low-income or underrepresented community members of state boards, commissions, councils, committees, and other similar groups with stipends and allowances to cover costs related to participation, including child care expenses.[92] Finally, Washington expanded its state-funded preschool program to include summer programming.[93]

West Virginia enacted a measure (Senate Bill 656) that will provide a tax credit against the state corporate net income tax and the state personal income tax for expenditures related to the establishment and operation of employer-provided or -sponsored child-care facilities.[94] A bill that would allow child care providers participating in the child care assistance program to be paid based on enrollment, rather than children's attendance, passed the House Health Committee, but stalled in the House Finance Committee; lawmakers have continued to examine the feasibility of implementing this policy change during their interim legislative meetings.[95]

Wisconsin's legislature approved the last round of federal ARPA funds in February 2022, directing $194 million to continue the Child Care Counts Program, which uses the ARPA funds for stabilization grants to aid child care providers in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, teacher scholarships and stipends, and a significant investment in the state's child care shared services network (which brings together family and center-based early care and education programs to pool resources and leverage economies of scale).[96]

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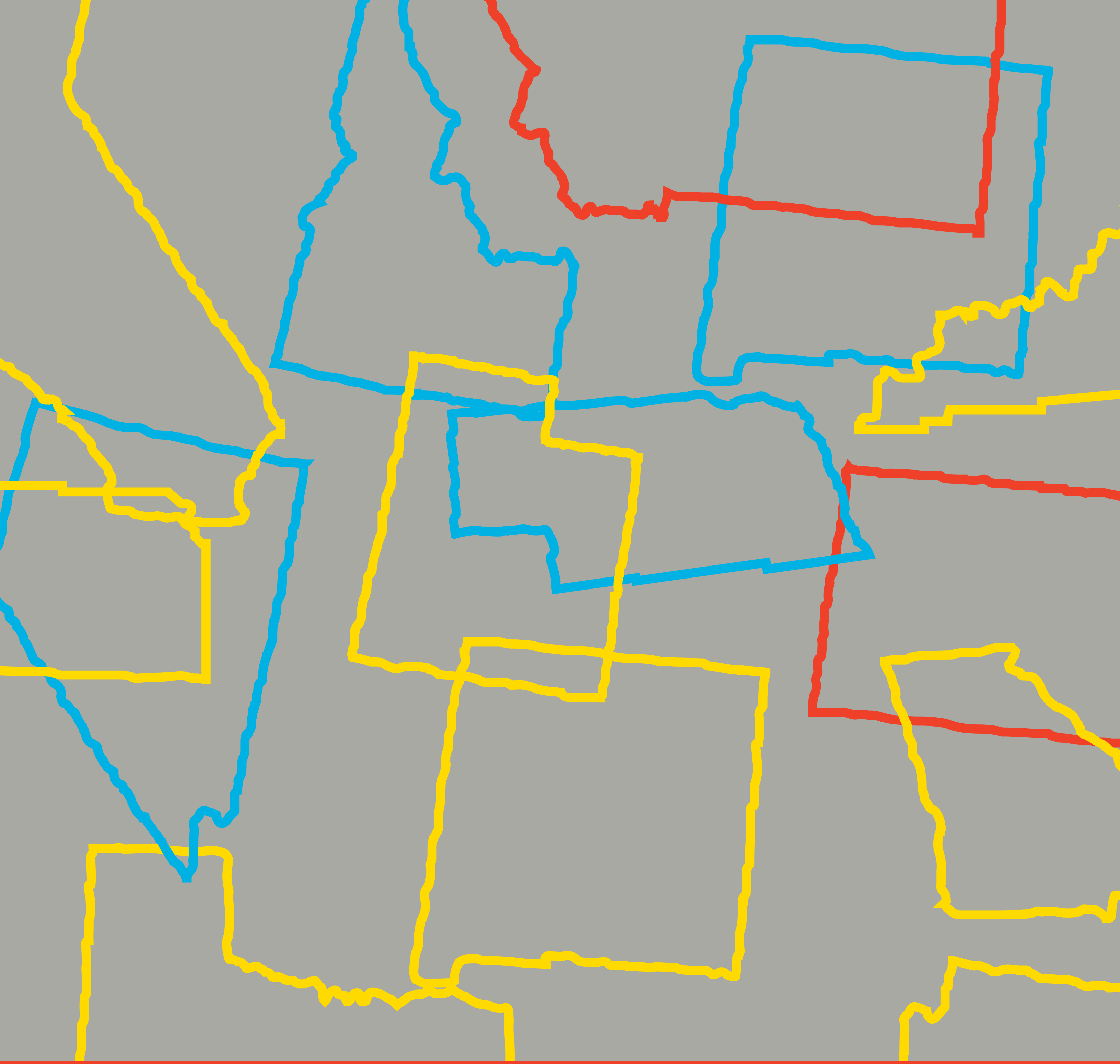

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