



NCSL REPORT

Early Care & Education

Child Care and Early Education Legislative Update Proposed Legislation, January 1 – February 28, 2007

This document offers an overview and examples of proposed legislation across the country at the start of 2007 legislative sessions. To date, at least 40 legislatures have proposed bills on early childhood care and education topics such as preschool, home visiting programs, child care subsidies, professional development, quality rating systems, tax credits, and kindergarten. Below are highlights of state legislative activities.

Preschool

Legislators in Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota and Utah, states that currently do not operate a state-funded preschool program, introduced bills that would allow school districts to operate and/or fund these initiatives. Idaho's bill would permit school districts to fund preschool services for 4-year-olds, but the bill does not require school districts to offer preschool nor appropriate state funds for this purpose. Mississippi's legislation authorizes the State Board of Education to implement a pilot voluntary preschool program. North Dakota's proposal would permit school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds and appropriate state funds. To date, this bill has passed the House and is in the Senate. A bill in Utah would establish a prekindergarten readiness program.

Legislators in at least seven states—Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas and Washington—proposed bills to expand their current state preschool programs. Colorado's school finance bill proposes an increase of 4,000 preschool/ kindergarten spaces and limits pre-k classroom size. Connecticut's legislation would provide for voluntary, universal prekindergarten in certain large cities by 2012. Iowa is considering a bill to implement a voluntary statewide preschool program for 4-year-olds, which would be phased in over several years. Oklahoma's legislators introduced a bill to direct the State Board of Education to establish a pilot early childhood education program for 3-year-olds. A proposal in South Carolina would make the Child Development Education Program available to all at-risk 4-year-olds. Texas and Washington bills would expand eligibility for the state's preschool program to include children in foster care.

Quality Rating Systems

Quality rating systems for child care facilities were introduced in California, Florida, Michigan and North Dakota. Kentucky's bill would require a licensed child care center to meet at least the minimum criteria for the first level of the child care rating system.

Professional Development

Several legislatures are focused on professional development. Hawaii lawmakers proposed a bill that included an early educator incentive program, and Mississippi's Legislature introduced a teacher wage incentive program. Wyoming's proposal would establish a grant program to assist staff of child care facilities to pursue continuing education in early childhood development. Indiana's proposal would require the state to establish preschool teacher training and certification standards.

Home Visiting

Lawmakers in three states—Iowa, Minnesota and Texas—introduced legislation on home visiting. Minnesota's bill would increase funding for the Home Visiting Early Childhood Family Education Program. Iowa lawmakers introduced legislation to establish a home visiting program for all families with a newborn child, and Texas legislators proposed a competitive grant program to fund nurse-family partnership programs in several communities and a bill to provide home visits to low-income first-time mothers.

Collective Bargaining

Three states—Connecticut, Maryland and New Mexico—have proposed legislation to allow family child care providers to collectively bargain. A Connecticut proposal would allow family child care providers and unlicensed child care providers under the Care4Kids program to bargain collectively with the state. Maryland's proposed legislation would authorize family child care providers to designate which organizations could be the joint negotiating representative for certain providers. New Mexico introduced legislation to permit child care providers to collectively bargain.

Tax Credits

Legislators in at least 10 states—Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island—proposed legislation that involved tax credits for child care expenses. Tax credits for employers that provide child care for employees was introduced in Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, New York, North Dakota and Rhode Island. Legislators in Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, New York and Pennsylvania proposed bills to permit an individual to claim a state income tax credit for certain child care expenses.

Kindergarten

Eighteen states—Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Utah—proposed legislation that involved kindergarten programs. Connecticut, Indiana and Rhode Island lawmakers proposed legislation that would require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten. Legislators in Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio and Oregon proposed new funding to reimburse school districts that choose to offer voluntary, full-day kindergarten. Utah's proposal would appropriate funds to expand full-day kindergarten to the state's Title I schools.

Other states introduced bills that would change the age of entry for kindergarten or lower the compulsory school age.

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