



NCSL REPORT

Early Care & Education

Synopsis of Bills Introduced in 1/01/07 – 5/01/07

Alabama

A bill that appropriates funds from the Education Trust Fund to the state's Head Start program was assigned to the House Education Finance and Appropriations Committee.

Arkansas

A measure that requires the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY) program to be a parent involvement component of all federally funded Arkansas preschool programs was withdrawn from consideration by its author. A proposal that provides for the construction of early childhood education centers remains in the Senate Education Committee.

Arkansas lawmakers introduced several bills that would have affected child care tax credits, driver's license requirements to transport children, and several appropriations bills for early childhood education and after-school programs.

Arizona

Lawmakers introduced seven early childhood care and education bills. Three of them impact market rate surveys and payments — one requires a market rate survey every two years and another requires certain reimbursement payments at either the 75th percentile or the 100th percentile of the market rate. A bill that appropriates \$15 million for a market rate survey also includes a nine percent increase in subsidy rates. An initiative that was the second part of a three year plan to increase full-time licensing staff appropriates the funds necessary to reach a 50 to 1 ratio of facilities to licensing staff. Additional bills addressed pediatric early literacy and early intervention autism treatment.

California

At least 23 bills that relate to early childhood issues were introduced in the California Legislature. They cover issues such as quality rating systems, child care licensing, exemptions from licensure, eligibility for child care subsidies, and resource and referral services. Four proposed bills address how funds are appropriated or spent. A bill under consideration requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to annually roll over unspent funds from the state preschool program into the prekindergarten and family literacy program until all eligible children were served. Another bill appropriates funds to state child care resource and referral programs and local planning councils for certain children with disabilities, and requires an annual cost-of-living adjustment equivalent to those received by other similar programs in the state.

The Appropriations committee considered a proposal to require the Child Development Division, in the event that an original preschool contract award is terminated, suspended, or relinquished, to assign first priority to applicants that will maintain a preschool class within a specified area. The Senate Human Services committee received a bill that prohibits California Children and Families

Program funds from being used to promote programs or activities that are not authorized by a certain statute or a voter initiative.

The Assembly Appropriations committee considered two bills that amend the Child Care and Development Services Act. One of them revises and reorganizes various provisions that relate to the reimbursement and auditing of child care and development providers. The other proposal allows child care contractors to increase the reserve fund they maintain from earned, but unexpended, state or federal child development funds affects from two percent to five percent. The bill's sponsor believes that the current policy prevents these providers from maintaining a sufficient reserve for unforeseen budget pressures.

The Senate Education Committee reviewed a bill related to child care and development services and alternative payment programs. It authorizes an alternative payment program to apply for certain reimbursements, subject to the discretion of the State Department of Education. A different bill that was sent to this committee requires the State Department of Education, under certain circumstances, to collect data regarding child care and development programs and report its findings to the legislature.

Lawmakers considered a proposal that requires community dental programs which serve students in prekindergarten through sixth grade to be developmentally appropriate and have services provided by a licensed or registered dental professional. The Senate Health Committee considered a bill to require the Department of Developmental Services to implement guidelines to screen children enrolled in the Early Start program for autism spectrum disorders.

Colorado

As of May 3rd, 2007, a bill that creates a statewide system of early childhood councils was scheduled for a third reading in the Senate. A bill to replace the Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission with the Early Childhood Commission was reported favorably out of the Education Committee but the Appropriations committee postponed it indefinitely. The Appropriations committee also postponed indefinitely a bill to create a legislative oversight committee and special council. It develops an integrated public education system ranging from pre-kindergarten through higher education.

Two proposed bills improve child care by increasing the number of licensing visits. Instead of mandatory inspections only in response to initial licensing, a complaint, or a violation, the bills required annual visits to each facility.

Governor Ritter issued an executive order to create the P-20 Education Coordinating Council. Among other activities, the Council will identify options for early childhood education.

Connecticut

Connecticut's legislators introduced at least 34 bills that address early childhood topics such as after school care, appropriations for certain grant programs, professional development, evaluation, and parent involvement. Two of the bills established school readiness pilot programs for children who are homeless due to poverty or domestic violence. Some of the appropriations bills fund after-school care, increase funding for early childhood development services, increase the funds available to early childhood education programs, and fund the Even Start literacy program for the purpose of

improving the literacy skills of young children. A bill introduced in the House of Representatives that allows a \$1,000 income tax credit for child care expenses.

Legislators introduced three bills on universal early childhood programs. They establish a universal school readiness program, provide for universal preschool education in large cities, and require a study on the feasibility of universal preschool for four-year-olds. All of these bills failed the joint favorable deadline, in addition to a proposal to establish a Department of Early Childhood. The Joint Committee on Education considered whether to provide the Parents as Teachers Program in family resource centers and whether to require certain after-school programs to incorporate a parent involvement component.

The Joint Committee on Human Services considered whether to allow a relative caregiver to receive a uniform subsidy regardless of whether the child is committed to the Department of Children and Families. This Committee also reported favorably a bill that provides professional development to certain child care providers and a proposal to permit in-home child care providers to collectively bargain.

Delaware

The Delaware House Education Committee reported out, without recommendation, a bill that codifies the Delaware Early Care and Education Council. The Council was established by Executive Order in 2001 to report on certain early childhood services. The Senate Committee on Children, Youth and Families considered a bill that creates a five-tier child care reimbursement based upon quality standards. In March, a bill was introduced in the Senate that requires the minimum child care reimbursement rate to be 75% of the fair market rate within two years. It was referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

Florida

At least 22 bills were introduced in the Florida Legislature that pertained to early childhood care and education. Both the Senate and the House considered several comparable bills. One pair of bills establishes a voluntary quality rating system in the Agency for Workforce Innovation, and another creates the Early Learning Office in the Executive Office of Governor. Both chambers also considered bills to revise the number of instructional hours required for a school-year prekindergarten program that is delivered by a private provider, and the requirements for a prekindergarten student to be considered full-time.

Several bills were proposed that expressed legislative intent. One revises laws regarding early learning, and another bill expressed intent to prioritize certain children to receive placement in a quality child care center. It also requires district licensing agencies to report on the capacity of quality child care centers.

Lawmakers introduced other bills that authorize certain funds for a home-based early intervention program that serves children with Autism Spectrum Disorder; address licensing regulations for religious-exempt child care programs; regulate food in the Child Care Food Program; require the state legislature to operate a child care center in the capitol complex; and require child care providers to be trained about domestic violence.

Georgia

Representatives in Georgia introduced a bill to create the HOPE Literacy Scholar Program, which trains HOPE scholarship recipients as reading tutors for children in prekindergarten through fourth grade. In the event their GPA falls below the required standard, under certain circumstances participating tutors would be permitted additional time to regain the necessary grades prior to losing their HOPE scholarship. A bill that transfers additional licensing and inspection duties from the Department of Human Services to the Department of Early Care and Learning was referred to the House Committee on Children. The House of Representatives passed a resolution to create a Senate Study Committee on Quality of Child Care. It is currently pending in the Senate.

Hawaii

Similar bills were introduced in both the House and the Senate that establish a curriculum specifically for the junior kindergarten program; prohibit junior kindergartners from transitioning directly to the first grade; and require certain qualifications for preschool teachers and aides. Two bills address state employee child care. One resolution requires a study on providing child care to children of state employees, and the second proposal requires the state to provide this service to its employees.

Two proposed bills appropriate funds to the Preschool Developmental Screening program, the Family Health Services division, and the Injury Prevention and Control project. A bill in the Senate Ways and Means committee appropriates funds to early intervention services for children with Down syndrome.

Legislators in the House of Representatives introduced bills that establish a tax credit for parents who enroll in parenting and child development classes; permit certain public assistance recipients to provide full-time, at-home care to children ages two and younger; and establish an early education workforce incentive program. Two House resolutions request the Board of Education to assess which supplemental academic activities are included in the A-Plus After School Program. They both passed the House and the concurrent resolution proceeded to the Senate, where the Committee on Education recommends it to pass.

Idaho

Idaho's Senate passed a bill that permits school districts to provide prekindergarten classes, although it prohibits the use of state funds for this purpose. It also requires prekindergarten teachers to pass certain assessments in order to receive an Idaho standard elementary teaching certificate. This bill stalled in the House Committee on Education.

Lawmakers in the House of Representatives introduced several bills on early childhood issues. A concurrent resolution encourages the Department of Health and Welfare and the Department of Education to work together to develop early childhood learning standards, to establish a tiered reimbursement linked to a quality rating system for preschools, and to spend federal funds for high quality child care. Another bill requires child care centers and family child care homes that care for two or more children to be licensed. Currently, there are no regulations for providers who care for six or fewer children and minimal regulations for those who care for seven to twelve children.

Illinois

Three bills passed the House of Representatives and are under consideration in the Senate Rules Committee. One would affect how the State Board of Education calculates the reimbursement of transportation costs when children enrolled in early education programs are transported at the same time as other eligible children. The second proposal reinstates the tax credit for start-up costs associated with employer-sponsored child care. The third bill requires the income eligibility limit for child care for TANF recipients to be no less than 185% of the federal poverty level and directs the Illinois Department of Public Aid, in consultation with its Child Care and Development Advisory Council, to develop a plan to revise the child care assistance program's co-payment schedule. The House also passed a bill that requires the State board of Education to create a P-20 Council. The purpose of the Council is to coordinate prekindergarten through grade 20 education.

The House Committee on Human Services considered a bill that would have extended eligibility for child care subsidies, regardless of income, to those families with a parent in active military duty or with a parent who was injured or killed while in the military.

Two introduced bills pertain to market rate surveys. The House proposal requires a market survey every other year and the Senate proposal repeals requirements for a market rate survey and other provisions. Lawmakers introduced numerous initiatives to make technical corrections to the child care statute. Two of them affected the Early Intervention Services System Act, and three related to the School Code.

Indiana

A resolution that passed the House but failed to be approved by the Senate establishes the Early Learning Trust Fund for certain early childhood educational programs. The House also passed a bill that creates a refundable income tax credit for employment-related child care expenses, although it limits the amount. This initiative is pending in the Senate Committee on Tax and Fiscal Policy. Additional bills that are pending in this committee establish tax credits for employers who spend money to provide child care and resource and referral services on behalf of their employees.

Two bills failed to pass the House Ways and Means Committee. One requires certain preschool pilot programs to coordinate with other public programs and establishes preschool teacher training and certification standards. The other bill creates a taxpayer check-off for the Military Relief Fund and allows certain grants to pay for child care assistance. This bill also broadens certain eligibility definitions to include all active duty members of the Armed Forces. The current law only specifies the Reserve and National Guard.

Lawmakers introduced bills in the House of Representatives that address how information about licensing violations is handled and changes existing regulations on the number of children who are permitted in the home.

Iowa

Senators introduced a bill that relates to the child and dependent care and early childhood development tax credits. In January, a bill that includes kindergarten and prekindergarten students in the actual enrollment of a district was introduced, but no action has occurred. Legislators considered whether to appropriate funds for a pilot child care center that provides care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Two proposals focus on registering providers who receive public funds for caring for one or more children. This changes the current requirement that providers must register if they care for five or more children. A related bill requires the Department to create an incentive for those providers to register.

Kansas

The Senate passed a bill that rescinds the requirements that certain state and local agencies which deliver early childhood services must collaborate and that the state Board of Education must develop and implement an alternative license for preschool teachers. It is currently pending in the House Education Committee.

Representatives introduced two bills that address licensing issues. One bill doubles the number of school-age children permitted in a family child care home during certain times such as when school is not in session. The second bill authorizes the governing body of any city, county, or school district to opt out of state licensure of child care facilities if they adopt their own child care licensure requirements.

Kentucky

Three bills introduced in the Kentucky House of Representatives affect early care and education services. One of the bills requires the Department of Education to identify a process for determining the school readiness of primary students, and another requires the Board of Education to develop and implement a parent education program. Lawmakers also considered a measure that requires child care centers to meet certain minimum standards as specified by the quality rating system.

Louisiana

Similar bills were introduced in the House and Senate that grant school readiness tax credits for child care providers, based upon the number of children who participate in the Child Care Assistance Program and the quality rating of the center; for eligible child care directors and staff based upon certain qualifications; and for eligible businesses that provide child care assistance, depending upon the quality rating of the center or facility to which the expenses are related. A bill under consideration by the Senate Education Committee would repeal the requirement that local school systems which participate in the LA 4 program must maintain certain funding levels.

Maine

Several proposed bills involved appropriations for early childhood care and education programs. One bill provides a one-time appropriation to increase quality by identifying and implementing best practices such as a quality rating system, child care resource development centers, and curricula for training providers. Another bill appropriates funds to increase the number of scholarships under the Quality Child Care Education Scholarship Fund and a one-time appropriation to the University of Maine to develop a degree program for teachers.

The Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs considered bills to require the Department of Education to develop standards for all prekindergarten education programs and analyze the effects of prekindergarten on community providers, to extend the window of eligibility during which a child can continue with the Child Development Services System, to integrate approval of certain early childhood education plans into certain laws, and to implement the recommendations of the Subcommittee to Study Early Childhood Special Education.

Lawmakers also introduced two bills that relate to after-school programs. One bill calls for a review of before- and after-school programs and creates a study group. A second provides funds for after-school programs in communities that do not have them. The Joint Committee on Health and Human Services considered two bills that change how certain child care providers are reimbursed.

A bill to study the need for a child care center in the State House Complex was defeated in the Joint Committee on State and Local Government. Bills were introduced in the House of Representatives that allow an income tax deduction for certain business expenses associated with construction costs and direct support for an employee child care center, and another bill increases the personal income tax deduction for child care expenses.

Massachusetts

Three bills were introduced on the topic of tax credits for employers who provide child care, child care benefits or subsidies. Additional proposals amend the law regarding collective bargaining for family child care providers; require seat belts on buses used to transport preschool students; and another addresses early literacy programs.

Lawmakers in the House of Representatives introduced bills that provide for a lead paint abatement program; establish licensure for agencies that place au pairs and nannies; require that certain child care providers who contract or subcontract with the state must pay a living wage, and 80 percent of health insurance costs, to all employees.

A bill that requires the Board of Early Education and Care to adopt certain early childhood program standards and to evaluate the capacity of the existing early education and care system to achieve certain goals is eligible for Executive Session.

Michigan

A bill was introduced in the House Committee on Family and Children and Children Services that requires the department to develop a quality rating system for child care centers, family child care, and group child care. The Senate Committee on Families and Human Services considered whether to amend licensing and registration requirements for child care centers. The House and Senate passed resolutions that urge Congress to provide additional funding for Head Start and child care.

Minnesota

In Minnesota, many bills are introduced with companions in the other chamber. Although companion bills are almost identical, their language can change as they move through the legislative process. At least ninety bills, approximately half of which were companions, were introduced on early childhood topics. Twenty-two bills were introduced which appropriate or increase funding for early childhood programs such as early childhood family education, school readiness programs, Head Start, a home visiting program for children diagnosed with mental illness or developmental delays, and the Early Learning Foundation.

A bill that establishes a family, friend, and neighbor grant program to promote children's early literacy and school development is pending in the House Committee on Finance and the Senate Committee on Finance. These committees are also considering a bill that establishes an advisory school readiness board to make recommendations on developing a coordinated system for delivering early childhood programs, and another proposal to expand early childhood developmental screening.

The House Committee on Health and Human Services recommends the passage of several bills. One bill exempts school-operated preschool programs from child care licensure requirements. Another proposal addresses a family child care demonstration project for school age care. Companion bills are currently under consideration in the Senate Committee on Health, Housing and Family Security. A bill recommended for passage by the House Committee on Health and Human Services requires annual inspections of child care centers and licensed family child care homes (currently licensing inspections are conducted once every two years). This proposal was referred to the House Committee on Finance.

A bill was introduced that requires the Commissioner of Human Services to develop and implement an early childhood and school-age professional development system in cooperation with the Commissioner of Education and Health. The bill would appropriate funding to expand the pilot quality rating system program, with funding transferred to the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF), child care services grants administered by child care resource and referral agencies, and an early childhood professional development system.

A bill pending in the Senate Committee on Health, Housing and Family Security also involves the Commissioner of Human Services. It requests that the Commissioner study child care provider standards and the implications of restricting the use of state subsidies in center-based child care to those that meet state quality standards. Factors in the study include whether a provider can meet the standards, the cost associated with helping a provider to meet the standards and how this cost would be funded, how the standards and the ratings would be communicated to both parents and the general public, and a determination of whether a similar system could be implemented for non-center-based care.

Two bills proposed to change the income eligibility measure for child care assistance from a percentage of the federal poverty level to a percentage of the state median income and would change co-payment amounts. A bill that creates a refundable individual income tax credit for people who provide qualifying volunteer service at their children's school or child care facility was referred to the House Committee on Taxes, where there has been no action.

In March, a bill which appropriates funding to increase training and mentoring services to licensed family child care providers was referred to House Committee on Finance. The Senate Finance Committee considered a proposal that directs counties to develop recommendations for a one-time home visiting program that provides information about health, safety, and school readiness to certain unlicensed family child care providers.

An omnibus bill that increases income eligibility limits, increases reimbursement rates, reduces co-pays, and reduces licensing fees has passed both the House and Senate and as of April 23, 2007, the bill was in conference committee.

Mississippi

At least 23 early childhood bills were introduced in the Mississippi legislature. They would create the Mississippi Foundation for Early Childhood Development, a public-private partnership to improve school readiness; implement a voluntary pilot program for prekindergarten children; incorporate a teacher wage incentive program as part of the quality rating system; and require the Department of Human Services to subcontract and collaborate with other early childhood entities.

A bill was introduced to require the Department of Health Services to transfer the maximum permitted amount of uncommitted TANF funds each year to the Child Care and Development Fund. It passed the House but died in the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare. Another bill that died in the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare revises membership on the child care advisory council and increases licensure fees.

Lawmakers introduced two bills that address early childhood teachers. Proposals to establish a child care provider development and retention grant program, a child care provider scholarship program, and a healthy early education workforce grant program did not pass out of committee. Senators introduced a bill that requires an articulation agreement between community colleges and university programs. It provides for the transfer of appropriate credits from the Child Development Technology Degree Program at various community colleges to the appropriate college program at certain universities.

Bills were introduced in both chambers that require the state Department of Education to establish minimum guidelines for early childhood education programs that are implemented in licensed child care facilities; to prohibit child care facilities that fail to meet the requirements from operating; and to require programs to comply with certain standards by 2010.

Two bills address governance. A proposal that transfers authority for the child care development fund/TANF program to the Department of Education stalled in the Appropriations Committee. A measure to transfer licensing from the Department of Health to the Department of Human Services was referred to the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare.

Missouri

At least fifteen bills were introduced in the Missouri Legislature that involve early childhood topics. Five of them pertain to early intervention services, primarily specifying that certain provisions will not sunset. In March, the Senate Committee on Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight voted to pass a bill that eliminates the sunset provision of the early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities. The Senate Committee on Education considered a proposal to create the Part C Early Intervention Pilot Program Fund to allow certain entities to contract for providers of early intervention services for underserved areas. Another bill creates the Missouri Preschool Plus grant program to deliver high-quality early childhood educational services in school districts where at least 30% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Two bills reference quality rating systems. One requires the Departments of Social Services and Health and Senior Services, in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and other key individuals, to develop a quality rating system for child care facilities and early childhood programs. Licensing is the baseline rating and the highest rating is accreditation. This bill was introduced but never assigned to a committee. A second proposal requires state agencies to develop a quality rating system for early childhood and before-and after-school programs that are sponsored by public school districts. It passed the Senate and proceeded to the House Committee on Rules, which recommends it to pass.

Numerous bills concern income eligibility rates for child care subsidies. Bills propose to raise the income eligibility limit to certain percentages of the Federal Poverty Level and offer proportional benefits to certain families, based upon their income.

Nebraska

Five early childhood care and education bills were introduced in the Legislature. Two bills are pending in the Legislative Committee on Education. One proposal establishes the Early Childhood Education Legislative Study Group, and the other bill permits statewide regional networks under the Special Education Act.

In 2002, a gubernatorial budget line-item veto lowered the child care assistance eligibility standard to 120% of the federal poverty level. The Legislative Committee on Health and Human Services considered a proposal to restore the income eligibility guideline to 185% of the federal poverty level. The Legislative Committee on Revenue indefinitely postponed a bill that eliminates the business child care tax credit.

At the request of the Governor, the Speaker introduced a bill that would change the child care reimbursement rate levels based upon a market rate survey. It authorizes the reimbursement rate to be between the 50 and 60 percent of the current market rate, or the current established rate, whichever is greater.

New Hampshire

A bill that requires certain health insurers to cover expenses associated with early intervention services passed the Senate and is currently pending in the House Committee on Commerce. The House failed to pass a proposal that exempts family child care providers and family group child care homes from local ordinances that limit the number of occupants in a home.

New Jersey

Two bills were proposed in the New Jersey Legislature that concerned early intervention program services for children with autism. One of these bills passed the Assembly and proceeded to the Senate. The Assembly considered a proposal that requires health insurers to provide coverage for certain expenses incurred for medically necessary early intervention services for certain children who are younger than three years old. A measure to establish the Preschool through Grade 20 Council, for the purpose of creating a more connected education system and greater collaboration between earlier education and college, has not passed the Assembly.

New Mexico

Both chambers considered several identical bills. The bills appropriate funds to increase eligibility limits for child care programs to two hundred percent of the federal poverty level; to increase the reimbursement rate for licensed child care providers; to improve the quality of early child care programs; to provide for scholarships to help early childhood teachers study child development and early learning while earning college degrees; to provide for a pilot program of wage supplements for early childhood teachers based on the educational level that those teachers achieve; to expand services through child development grants for working families with children from birth to five years of age; to expand at-home infant care; to ensure quality early intervention services for eligible children; and to reimburse providers for services.

Lawmakers introduced two bills that permit family child care providers to form, join or assist a labor organization for the purpose of collective bargaining with the Children, Youth and Families Department through union representatives. One of the bills passed the House and both the Senate Committee on Judiciary and the Senate Committee on Public Affairs recommended it to pass. The

House also passed a bill that directs an interim committee to consider on-site child care for state employees. The Senate Committee on Rules recommended this bill to pass.

The Senate Committee on Finance and the Senate Committee on Public Affairs considered a bill to appropriate \$1 million to pay the employee portion of a health premium for eligible child care workers. The Senate Committees on Education and Finance considered bills to appropriate funds for a Parent Involvement and School Readiness Pilot Program and to provide for the transportation of prekindergarten students to public schools and private providers. At least seven bills were introduced that appropriate funds for after-school programs in specific school districts and for a program at New Mexico University.

North Carolina

Eleven proposed bills would appropriate funds for purposes such as Smart Start, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, early autism intervention, child care subsidies, child care provider reimbursement rates, and to increase funding to assist student parents at community colleges. Another bill adjusts child care subsidy reimbursement rates in three-, four-, and five-star facilities to sixty percent (60%) of the difference between the 1997 and 2005 market rates.

Two bills were referred to the Senate committee on Education and Public Instruction that implement a social-emotional curriculum in public schools and preschools. The House passed a proposal that requires the Department of Health and Human Services Family Resource Center Grant program to fund only those family support programs that are research-based and have been evaluated for effectiveness. It is pending in the Senate Committee on Appropriations/Base Budget. Other bills request a study of the formula by which market rates are determined and exempt certain churches that operate child care centers from property taxes.

North Dakota

A bill that permits school district boards to establish a voluntary prekindergarten program for four year olds passed the House but failed to pass the Senate. The House Committee on Finance and Taxation considered a proposal to create an income tax credit to employers who contribute to child care for the dependents of employees.

Nevada

Several early childhood bills are pending in the Senate Committee on Finance. They would create a P-16 Advisory Council; provide funding for child care for medically fragile children; and create an employer tax credit for expenses associated with providing child care for employees.

A proposal which designates the Office of the Director as the state agency to cooperate with federal authorities in the administration of Part C of IDEA and to supervise the administration of those services passed the Senate and is pending in the Assembly Committee on Health and Human Services

A bill that requires child care facilities to maintain and provide certain information to parents has passed the Assembly and is currently in the Senate Committee on Human Resources and Education. Lawmakers introduced a bill that provides funding for the Greater Las Vegas After-School All-Star program, and it was referred to the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means.

New York

Legislators introduced three bills that affect the transportation of prekindergarten children. One permits the State Board of Education, under certain circumstances, to contract to transport prekindergarten children, and a separate bill allows New York City to contract for the transportation of prekindergarten and early intervention children. A bill that expands the definition of a bus to include those owned by preschools has passed the Assembly and is in the Senate Committee on Transportation.

Other proposals protect the air quality of day care centers; provide state funds for preschool and kindergarten programs operated by child care centers; relate to the funding of preschool special education, and require certain nursery school providers to file with the Office of Children and Family Services. Several bills would address health and safety issues. They limit the use of pesticides in child care centers, limit exposure to toxics, promote clean air quality, require that certain early childhood workers be trained in CPR, and reduce transfats. Additional bills require every child who enrolls in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, or first grade in a public school to present an eye health certificate and a dental health certificate.

Numerous early childhood bills are pending in the Assembly Committee on Children and Families. They develop a differential child care reimbursement rate; require a study of a child care rating system; direct the Office of Children and Family Services to establish certain standards and issue a rated license; establish an advisory council of child care providers to review and advise the commissioner on current and proposed policy related to child care; direct the Office of Children and Family Services to study recruitment and retention of family child care providers; establish a grant program to assist TANF-eligible people who are seeking to establish a family child care home; select developmentally disabled child care programs to receive start up funding grants for certain purposes; provide child care funds in order to enable certain people who are age 24 and younger to continue secondary and post-secondary education; and limit co-payments for certain families.

The Senate Committee on Social Services, Children and Families considered bills that authorize local governments to require that any dwelling used for a family day care be the primary residence of the applicant; authorize a study of a child care rating system; provide grants to child care centers for internet-ready computer systems; and amend the maximum capacity limitations for group family day care home.

A bill to create child care professional loan forgiveness programs is currently pending in the Senate Committee on Higher Education. Legislators introduced a number of bills to create tax credits for employers who provide child care assistance or resource and referral services to their employees; to permit tax credits for services provided by family child care providers; and to provide deductions for individuals for child care and preschool expenses. Two proposals require the Department of Labor to conduct a study of the economic impact of the child care industry on the state economy.

Ohio

A bill that was introduced in the House of Representatives implemented multiple changes to enhance the licensing inspection laws.

Ohio's Governor Ted Strickland issued two executive orders that address prekindergarten programs. Executive Order 4 raised the maximum child care reimbursement rates to the 65th percentile of the 2006 market survey. This order also established the Early Childhood Cabinet to unite state agencies around the common goal of promoting school readiness and to coordinate state policies which serve Ohio's children, prenatal to six years of age. Executive Order 5 suspended the normal rulemaking procedures in order to implement Executive Order 4 immediately. It was necessary to increase child care reimbursement rates immediately in order to access certain federal funds.

Oklahoma

The House of Representatives passed a bill to permit taxpayers with qualifying minor children to choose the greater of: a credit equal to 5% of the child credit allowed under the Internal Revenue Code, or the existing State child-care-expense credit. It is now in the Senate Committee on Finance. This same committee is also considering a proposal to provide an exemption from sales tax for 3-star rated centers, accredited centers, or providers of 4-year-old pre-kindergarten.

Oregon

Two bills were introduced which appropriate funds from the General Fund to the Department of Education for Oregon's prekindergarten program. A proposed bill in the House appropriates \$90 million for the purpose of funding the Oregon prekindergarten program so it can serve all eligible children, and a similar measure in the Senate appropriates \$40 million for the same purpose. Another measure would have limited the maximum biennial expenditure from the Administrative Services Economic Development Fund for the Oregon prekindergarten program to \$40 million.

Oregon lawmakers introduced several bills addressing tax credits, collective bargaining and planning. The tax credit proposals included bills to remove the sunset date on income tax credits for contributions to the child care division; to remove the annual limit on certificates; and to modify the working family child care income tax credit so that it can be claimed for child care costs by persons with disabilities. The collective bargaining proposals gave family child care providers the right to collectively bargain. Legislators also introduced initiatives to amend the duties of the department to inspect child care facilities and to restrict the spraying of pesticides.

Pennsylvania

A Representative introduced a bill that requires an annual state plan for child care and early childhood development services. The Senate Education Committee considered bills that provide targeted assistance to urban school districts to improve the school readiness of children, and establish the Early Childhood Education Fund. A proposal to create the Pennsylvania Military Child Care Assistance program for families with at least one parent who is on active duty is pending in the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness.

The Senate Finance Committee is considering several bills that pertain to tax credits. They include a tax credit for employers who provide child care facilities or subsidies and a personal income tax credit for unreimbursed child and dependent care expenses. The House Committee on Children and Youth considered bills that require certain child care facilities to install video surveillance cameras; develop a statewide child care resource and referral system; provide for unannounced

inspections of certain facilities and child care providers; and develop regulations for subsidized child care providers.

Lawmakers also introduced proposals to require religious organizations that provide child care to comply with basic health and safety laws, criminal background checks, and staff-child ratios and training; to provide for unannounced inspections of child care facilities; to require a study and report on health insurance discount options for child care providers through group pooling; and to create a grant program for lead-level testing of child care and preschool facilities.

Rhode Island

A bill was introduced in Rhode Island's House of Representatives that increases the eligibility age for an early intervention program from three to six years old. A bill that eliminates waiting periods for early intervention programs for autistic children was referred to the House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare.

Several bills passed their chamber of origin. The House of Representatives passed a measure to create a sixteen member special legislative commission for the purpose of studying transportation for after-school and child care programs. It also passed a bill that implements a voluntary quality rating system to increase the quality of early care and education. Senators passed a bill to amend the Child Care Legislative Commission.

The House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare recommended that a bill to require all public school districts to transport children to and from child care facilities located in the school district boundaries be held for further study. The House Committee on Finance is considering several proposals. One measure allows participants to receive child care if they work or attend education, and another increases child care income eligibility limits to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level.

South Carolina

The House Committee on Education and Public Works reported favorably on a bill that provides for the South Carolina Child Development Education Program for at-risk children, specifies the duties of program providers, and defines the minimum requirements for teachers in the program. The Senate Committee on Education considered a bill to initiate a four-year-old kindergarten program in the public schools. It never moved out of this committee. A bill to inform parents about shaken baby syndrome passed the Senate and is under consideration in the House.

Tennessee

A bill introduced in the Senate, with a companion bill in the House, requires the Office of Early Learning to collect data on children who were enrolled in prekindergarten programs. Other companion bills require pilot prekindergarten programs to be funded at the same level as existing prekindergarten programs.

The House Subcommittee on Higher Education and the Senate Committee on Education have bills pending that require local education agencies to give priority to non-school system entities with pre-existing pre-kindergarten classrooms when developing programs under the lottery-funded pre-kindergarten program. The House Committee on Education considered a bill to revise the pilot after-school programs funded by lottery proceeds.

Texas

Several proposed bills passed their house of origin and are under consideration in the other chamber. Bills that concern the licensing requirements of preschools operated by public or private schools; that involve the eligibility of certain foster care children to attend prekindergarten classes; and that pertain to a state school readiness integration project have all passed the Senate and moved to the House. Proposals that change the eligibility of certain educationally disadvantaged children to attend free prekindergarten classes and that involve the coordination and improvement of certain early childhood services passed the House and are pending in the Senate.

Lawmakers introduced a measure that creates the Baby Steps Demonstration Project. The goal of the Project is to assist child-care providers to meet the health, safety, and nurturing needs of infants and toddlers. The House Committee on Human Services considered a bill to grant variances to certain employer-based child-care facilities from specific licensing standards and a proposal that exempts certain facilities from child care licensing requirements.

Legislators introduced several bills that expand the eligibility for unemployment benefits to people who provide at-home infant care after the birth or adoption of a child for up to 12 weeks; offset child care expenses when calculating a person's income for SCHIP; limit the size of prekindergarten classes in public schools; and exempt certain preschools from child care licensing requirements.

Utah

A proposed bill deposits funds from beer tax revenues to the newly created Childhood Early Intervention Restricted Account to fund childhood early intervention programs. Another bill proposed to add citizenship or legal resident status as a requirement for obtaining a family child care certificate.

Vermont

On May 3, 2007, a bill that requires the state Board of Education and the Secretary of Human Services to adopt joint rules regarding prekindergarten went to conference committee. As it is currently written, the bill clarifies that a public school which offers prekindergarten classes may count those children in the average daily membership, with a weight of .46, and limits the number of prekindergarten students that a school district may count.

Lawmakers proposed a variety of bills that address subsidies and safety. One bill would provide a home child care income tax credit for parents who choose to care for a child under the age of six years at home. Another bill proposed a study designed to address the state child care subsidies and ensure that low and middle income working families are able to pay for quality child care. Incentive grant for child care centers using the child and adult care food program. A bill proposed to limit the use of pesticides in child care and school facilities and to require notification in addition to licensing and child safety bills.

Virginia

Virginia lawmakers introduced a bill to create a child care registry for child care providers. The Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services defeated a bill that would establish staff-to-child ratios, activity space guidelines, and training and qualification guidelines for program directors, program leaders, and general staff for regulated child day-care centers. The House passed a bill that adds program directors to the list of individuals who may possess an approved child care credential. It is currently under consideration in the Senate.

Washington

Companion bills were introduced that require the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development to implement an early learning and child care grant program specifically for programs located at institutions of higher education.

Other proposed bills require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to work with the Department of Early Learning to develop transition plans to ease the transition between early education and kindergarten; to extend the eligibility for certain early intervention services; and to establish a pilot program to provide preschool tuition scholarships for children in foster care. A measure to create additional safeguards for child care and provide tools to promote the hiring of suitable child care providers never made it out of the House Committee on Early Learning and Children's Services.

The House Appropriations Committee considered bills to establish a pilot program to provide consultation services for early learning and child care programs; to create the state Community Learning Center Program to support certain after-school programs; to provide child care grants to higher education institutions for the direct costs of providing child care for the children of students; and to establish an Early Learning Advisory Council and direct the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to implement a five-star voluntary rating system for early childhood care and education programs.

West Virginia

Lawmakers introduced bills to authorize rulemaking in child care and family child care; to establish child care tax credits for employers providing child care to their employees; and to exempt certain preschools from licensure.

Methodology

This document was prepared by Caroline Smith, Policy Specialist, National Conference of State Legislatures. It is a preliminary overview, and a final version will be posted on our website, <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/cc.htm>. The information was compiled through individual bill searches, reviews, and analyses. The author used StateNet, a legislative tracking database, to facilitate this process. If you'd like to contribute information about your state, or have questions about the content, please contact Caroline Smith at (303) 856-1389 or caroline.smith@ncsl.org.

Please note that this document is intended to provide examples of significant legislation in each state and does not include state budget appropriations, bills with technical changes, or all licensing categories. *Since January 1, 2007, over 1065 bills have been introduced on early childhood care and education issues.*