

April 2019



**New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department**

**Kelly Klundt**, senior fiscal analyst for New Mexico’s Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), a 2014 NCSL Early Learning Fellow and member of NCSL’s Prenatal-to-Three Legislative Advisory Group, supported establishing New Mexico’s new Early Childhood Education and Care Department. The department is being formed through passage of [SB 22](#), authored by Senator Michael Padilla (D) and Representative Linda M. Trujillo (D). This cabinet-level department will be responsible for child care assistance, home visitation, early prekindergarten (3-year-olds), early educator professional development, early intervention, and prekindergarten in collaboration with the Public Education Department. According to Klundt, “Early childhood programs in New Mexico were managed by several state agencies leading to some inconsistency and fragmentation.” She added, “momentum around such legislation has grown over the last two years”, and “New Mexico has strategically increased investments in early childhood programs for more than 10 years as a public policy tool to improve child and family outcomes.”

**Did You Know?**

NCSL staff authored an alumni report looking at the Early Learning Fellows program from 2011-2018.

Access the [report](#) or download a [PDF](#) version to learn a bit about the program, participants, why early learning is a topic of importance to legislators, and explore what participants have done back in their states at the conclusion of the program.

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Klundt and her colleagues studied the state’s early childhood system closely, including annual outcomes and accountability reporting and creating policy recommendations. “This legislation passed because New Mexico wanted to address fragmentation and many key stakeholders came together with the legislature,” Klundt said.



**Early Learning Collaborative Act in Mississippi**

**Senator Brice Wiggins** (R-Miss.), a 2016 NCSL Early Learning Fellow, introduced new legislation to build on past wins this session. Wiggins introduced [SB 2842](#), which builds on his previous legislative work including raising per child funding and aligning with the revised NIEER benchmarks. While SB 2844 did not pass this year, Wiggins plans to introduce similar legislation in 2020. He shared, “... in just four years approximately seven new collaboratives have been added and this new legislation would allow Mississippi going forward to maximize the collaboratives, give the state an excellent ROI and educate *young* children at the highest levels.”

Wiggins previously sponsored [SB 2395](#), known as the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013, establishing Mississippi’s state-funded prekindergarten program. An early learning collaborative includes public school districts, local Head Start affiliates, private or parochial schools, or one or more licensed child care centers. According the Wiggins, “one of the keys to the collaboratives’ success is that the legislature codified the [quality] benchmarks set out by the [National Institute for Early Education Research](#) (NIEER).” Mississippi currently meets nine of the 10 benchmarks.