



Early Learning Fellows Legislative Corner

A periodic publication highlighting the work of NCSL's Early Learning Fellows

May 2020

Oklahoma Bill to Allow Three-year Alternative Teaching Certificate



Representative Rhonda Baker (R), chair of Oklahoma's Common Education Committee and a 2018 Early Learning Fellow, introduced legislation in 2020 to address Oklahoma's prekindergarten educator shortage, decrease the need for emergency teachers in early childhood classrooms, and increase completion of early childhood teaching certificates by those working toward a teaching certificate. [HB 3434](#) would provide an alternative pathway for early childhood and elementary educators to earn a teaching certificate. If enacted, teacher candidates could enter classrooms on a one-year provisional certificate and gain additional knowledge through mandatory coursework and participation in a mentorship program. The provisional teaching certificate could be renewed up to three years as candidates prepare to take their teacher certification exam.

Representative Baker says her bill "will allow those who hold a bachelor's degree or higher, who are seeking to work in our classrooms, to gain the support they need to be successful in passing their certification tests." Prior to the coronavirus pandemic HB 3434 had made its way through the House and was onto a second reading in the Senate, the legislature has now reconvened and will meet through May 29, though Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat [indicated](#), "a lot of good bills may have to wait until another legislative session"

Washington Introduces Fair Start for Kids Act



Representative Tana Senn (D), chair of Washington's Human Services and Early Learning Committee and a 2014 Early Learning Fellow, sponsored [HB 2661](#), which aims to address Washington's child care crisis. If enacted, the bill would increase eligibility for child care assistance and early childhood services, increase provider rates, offer training and grants for early childhood educators, and establish new funding mechanisms. The legislation, which has bipartisan support, was cosponsored by former Early Learning Fellow Representative Lisa Callan (D) and Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self (D).

The Fair Start for Kids Act aims to make child care more accessible and affordable, bolster the child care workforce and provide parents with resources, such as parent skill-based programs and trainings, as they raise young children. "I know that child care is more expensive than college, which affects children, parents and our economy," Senn shared with NCSL.

Due to COVID-19, the Washington Legislature adjourned sine die on March 12. While HB 2661 did not make it through the legislature this year, Washington made significant investments that reflect the bill's goals. Senn noted, "While numerous measures were vetoed due to the COVID-19 impacts, Washington is already seeing the value of child care in helping health care professionals and first responders, as well as for the anticipated economic recovery."

Big News!

NCSL is launching a new online learning experience specifically for alumni of the Early Learning Fellows program. In 2020, we will tackle four complex issues that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. In the spirit of finding opportunities to improve the well-being of young children and their families in this crisis, we will explore the latest research in early brain development and trauma, financing strategies during an economic downturn, child care and the early care and education workforce and infant and early childhood mental health. The series is expected to launch in July, and alumni can look forward to receiving enrollment information in June.