



**ECACE**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS  
CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

**ECACE ADVISORY**  
**AUGUST 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2023**



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education



**Governor's Office of**  
**Early Childhood Development**



# WELCOME



## Ground Rules/Norms

We recognize both the value of collaborative and systems change work and the difficulty in engaging in this work. As such, we agree to operate per the ground rules below.

- Keep the early childhood workforce and young children and families at the center.
- Listen fully and thoughtfully.
- Commit to candid discussions of diverse ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Suspend predetermined positions to allow the collective intelligence to emerge.
- Monitor your personal technology.
- Share your voice; yet monitor your airtime.
- Be solutions oriented.
- Make effort to reach consensus.
- Respect requests for confidentiality – both implicitly and explicitly stated.



## Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Housekeeping
3. State-Level Work
  1. Understanding the goals of Smart Start
  2. Workforce Shout-outs
4. How is Higher Education Addressing Needs?
  1. Parkland College
  2. Program Design Community of Practice
5. Agency Updates
  1. GOECD Updates and Success
  2. Scholarship Updates
  3. ECACE First Annual Report
6. Approval of Minutes
7. Public Comment
8. Closing Comments – Next Meeting

# State Level Work



# Smart Start Implementation at IDHS

June 2023

# Nation-Leading Early Childhood

Strengthening and growing early childhood requires field sustaining funding reform and investment in affordability for families.

- Smart Start Illinois will **build on federal relief funded innovations** and take steps to realize goal of making Illinois the best state in the country to raise young children.
  - These investments pair with Preschool for All expansion to set a **national model for early childhood services**.
- Minimize child care deserts, raise child care wages, address the teacher shortage, and expand child care quality through investment in **Smart Start contracts, apprenticeships, and scholarships**.
  - Stabilize and support **Early Intervention**, ensuring that children with delays and disabilities receive the services needed for healthy development.
  - Sustain and expand **Home Visiting**, rooted in innovative funding practices successfully tested with relief dollars.



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# Budget Summary: DHS Early Childhood



Program	SFY23	SFY24 Passed	Change SFY23 to SFY24
Home Visiting	\$17,926,300	\$22,926,300	<b>+\$5 million</b> for Smart Start
Early Intervention	\$115,891,900	\$155,891,900	<b>+\$20 million</b> for Smart Start <b>+\$20 million</b> for caseload maintenance
Child Care	\$410,599,000	\$580,599,000	<b>+\$100 million</b> for Smart Start <b>+\$50 million</b> for caseload maintenance <b>+\$20 million</b> for CCMS improvements



**Smart Start is built upon the innovations tested during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Each IDHS program is in a different stage, focusing on studying, testing, and scaling innovative approaches to equitable funding.

- **Home Visiting in SFY24**

- Funding: Salary increases to floor, expand slots beyond federal relief fund expiration
- Planning: Develop strategy to increase number of slots in highest need communities

- **Child Care in SFY24**

- Funding: Smart Start Transition Grants (*formerly Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants*)
- Planning: Prep for contract rollout via ad hoc committee and cost model validation

- **Early Intervention in SFY24**

- Funding: 10% provider rate increase
- Planning: Prep for future improvement proposals via cost modeling and demonstration project



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# Smart Start Home Visiting



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# Smart Start Home Visiting

**Illinois is already a national leader\* in Home Visiting, on the cutting edge of innovative practices.**

In SFY23, IDHS-DEC integrated three home visiting programs – Healthy Families Illinois (HFI), Parents Too Soon, and the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) – in order to ensure **higher quality services** and stronger programs through **increased workforce compensation, higher quality data, and unified program standards**. This was done by:

- Using cost modeling to set grant award amounts
- Conducting a statewide needs assessment to prioritize communities with greatest need
- Reforming grants to require salary floors

The success of the program will be amplified with an additional **\$5M Smart Start investment to meet the increased demand for services, reaching an additional ~ 400 families in SFY24.**

\* [HRSA](#) has given IDHS-DEC's HV program "no findings or suggestions for areas of improvement", which is "extremely rare".



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**SFY24 will focus on fine-tuning the cutting-edge model already in use and sustaining slots that would otherwise end with federal relief funding.**

- Sustain slots expanded with federal relief funds
- Align all grantees with cost model for services
- Invest in infrastructure to support expanded service delivery
- Expand slots
- **Outcome: Solidify model and create approximately 310 additional slots anticipated to serve approximately 440 additional families.**



**SFY25 will build on SFY24's foundation by expanding slots into new communities in partnership with ISBE.**

- Expand slots across existing and/or new grantees, maintaining gains made in SFY24.
- **Outcome: Build on foundation and serve approximately 500-650 additional families above SFY24 levels.**

# Smart Start Child Care



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## By the Numbers: Child Care, CCAP, and Smart Start Contracts

Smart Start will improve industry dynamics by attracting more child care workers.

**7,700**

Licensed child care centers and homes in Illinois  
**6,000** currently receive CCAP

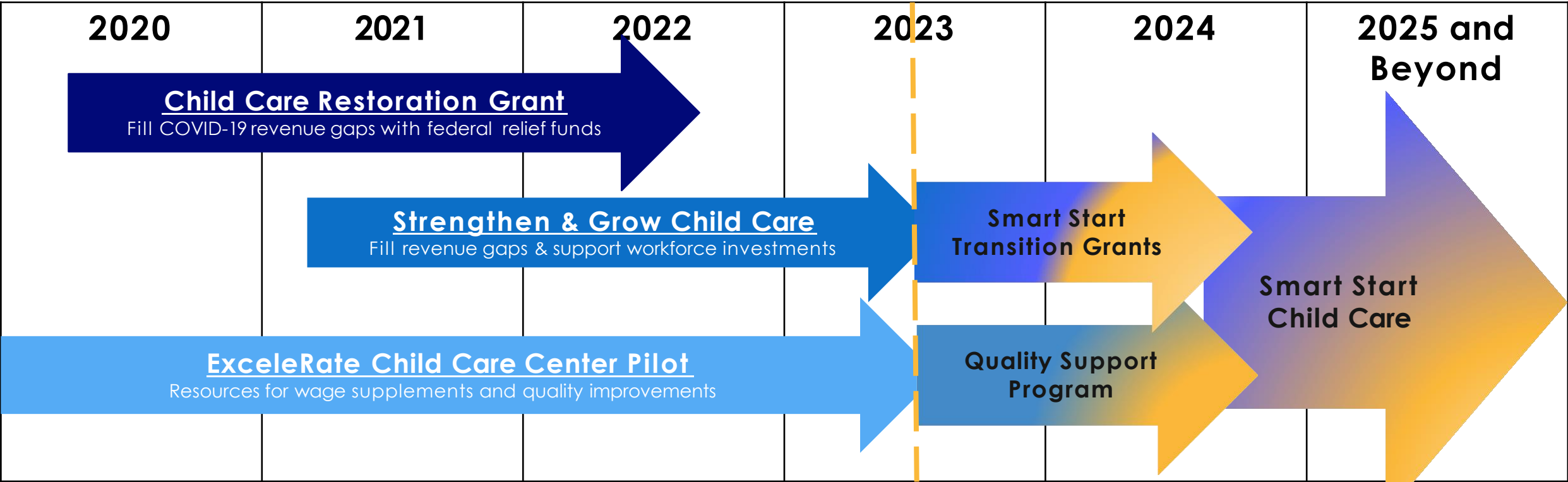
**233,000**

Children (ages 0-13) cared for in licensed child care centers and homes in Illinois

**124,000**

Children (ages 0-13) in CCAP in April 2023 (licensed and license-exempt programs)

# We are beginning a year of thoughtful, inclusive planning for Smart Start Child Care



We are here

**Smart Start Transition Grants form the bridge to Smart Start Child Care**

- Infant-toddler classroom (\$28,000/yr) awards are larger than Preschool awards (\$24,000/yr) to account for staffing / operational cost differences.
- Providers must invest 75% of award in personnel, up from 50%.
- Eligible providers qualify for additional funding for quality supports.



## The foundation of Smart Start Child Care Contracts is a well-vetted cost model

- Illinois began modeling the cost of child care in 2019.
- SFY24 budget proposal built using a model to determine cost to raise child care staff wages.
  - *Personnel: wages, benefits, staffing patterns*
  - *Non-personnel, including: rent, food, utilities, supplies and equipment, maintenance, insurance, etc.*
- Model must be updated and honed with child care providers this summer to ensure contract accuracy.

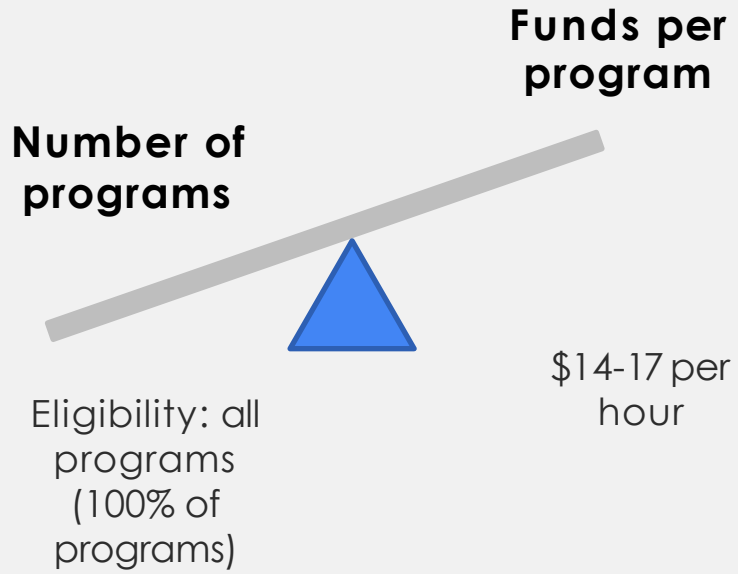


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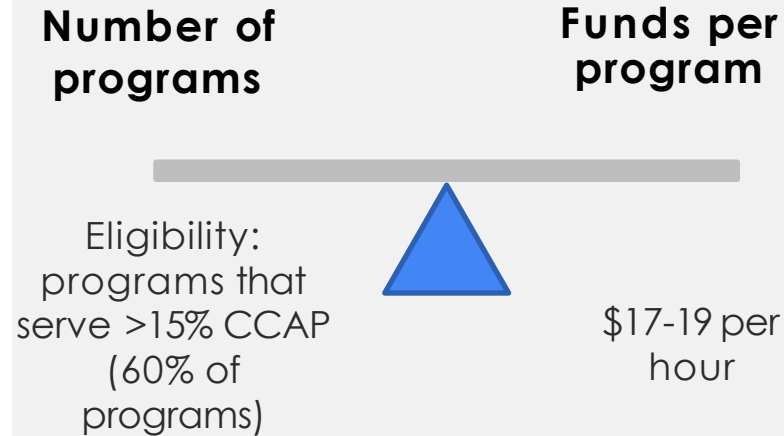


**Smart Start Child Care must reach a significant portion of the field to positively impact the workforce. This will cap wage increases for child care workers.**

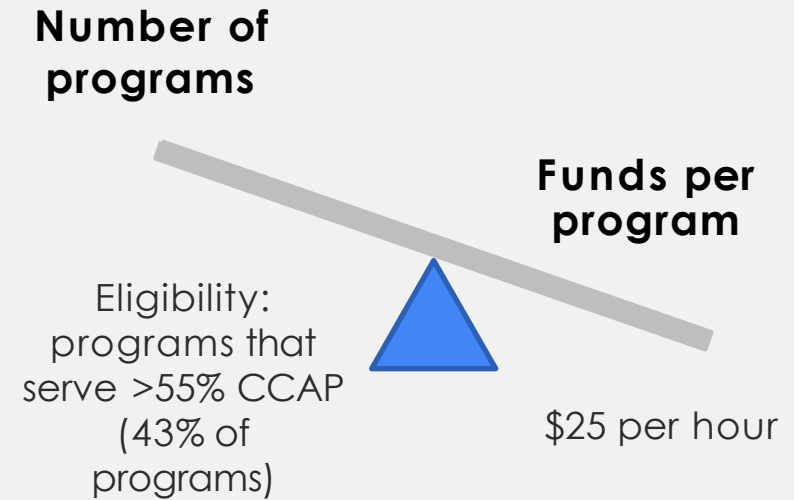
\$14-17 per hour wage floor



\$17-19 per hour wage floor



\$25 per hour wage floor



# A Collaborative Approach

- **Nov 2022:** First meeting with Child Care Contracts Committee
- **Jan 2023:** Proposed initial framework for Smart Start Child Care, developed in partnership with stakeholders.
- **SFY24:** Refine program specifics while distributing Smart Start Transition Grants to avoid funding gaps.
  - Continued partnership with stakeholders **as required by BIMP**
  - Monthly committee meetings, surveys, focus groups
  - Input on questions like:
    - Does our **cost modeling** ensure that all providers receiving Smart Start will have enough funding to meet required wage floors?
    - What is the right balance between **size of wage increase** for staff and **number of programs** we can reach with a finite budget?
    - What **accountability measures** will ensure that we know programs are spending funds appropriately without overly burdening providers?
    - How can IDHS and partners effectively **communicate** about Smart Start Child Care and provide the **training and technical assistance** providers need to succeed in Smart Start?
- **SFY25:** Full implementation of Smart Start Child Care.

Help  
is here



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# Contracts: a giant leap toward consolidated funding

## Coordinating funding helps eliminate preschool deserts and achieve Funding Commission recommendations

- **Larger awards for infant-toddler classrooms** through Smart Start Child Care will help providers cover the true cost of infant-toddler care without relying on preschool classrooms to supplement revenue, which will help ensure sustainability
- Smart Start Child Care will **prepare providers to apply for Early Childhood Block Grants or Head Start funding**
  - Higher wages and quality investments will support staffing quality improvement
  - Training and technical assistance will familiarize providers with State grant applications and requirements

# Smart Start Early Intervention



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# What is Early Intervention, anyway?

- **Early Intervention is a federal entitlement program covering 16 core services** including speech, physical, occupational, developmental, and other therapies, plus service coordination.
- If families, pediatricians, child care providers, etc. are concerned about a child's development, they can:
  - Call local Child and Family Connections office to request developmental evaluation
  - Meet with service coordinator and service providers to determine eligibility for EI
  - Develop a plan for supports and services that will be provided on family's schedule and in family's home or community
- **Early Intervention services:**
  - Enhance child development
  - Build family capacity
  - Minimize future need for special education services



**As proposed, a 10% rate increase in SFY24 will support workforce recruitment and retention to ease service delays.**

- IDHS is preparing, with HFS, to implement the 10% rate increase on July 1, 2023.

**We will also spend SFY24 studying ways to improve Illinois' system for funding Early Intervention, with proposals to come in Fall 2023.**

- Early Intervention cost modeling to inform future rate-setting.
- Demonstration projects to test out new methods of providing infrastructural support for families with greater needs.
- New Service Coordinator recruitment and workforce development tactics.
- Research into lessons learned from other states.
- Focus on improvements that can expand equitable access to EI services.

# Additional Smart Start Initiatives



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## Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE)

- Program will continue in SFY24 with ARPA federal relief funding, administered by IBHE, ICCB, ISAC, and IDHS.
- ECACE **community-based navigators** have supported child care workers' return to higher education

## Smart Start Quality Support Program (Formerly: The ExceleRate Pilot)

- The Smart Start Quality Support (SSQS) Program, formerly the ExceleRate Pilot, began in State Fiscal Year 2021 and continues to support thirty-four centers (Beneficiary) in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Cost Area 2 that are going beyond the ExceleRate Illinois Licensed Circle of Quality and implementing the specified Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) practices.

## Illinois Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship Pilot

- To address the EC workforce crisis, IDHS-DEC will implement an apprenticeship program to connect classroom-based learning with real world work experiences. The pilot will:
  - Complete process for **Registered Apprenticeship** approval by US Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship in collaboration with IDHS.
  - Implement pilot apprenticeship program at selected site(s)
  - Complete analysis of pilot and provide recommendations for sustainable, scalable implementation of the program.



Thank you!



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# Questions for Consideration

- How can the Advisory Committee help to understand how these goals can be accomplished?
- What are the needs you see occurring in the field?
- What things did you not hear that will be important in ensuring success?
- What work is happening parallel to this work that would be helpful for us to know and integrate in practice?

# How is Higher Education Addressing Needs?



## early childhood education

**PARKLAND**  
COLLEGE

In Spring 2022, 16 students were enrolled in three Child Development courses at Parkland.

We re-established our AAS in Summer 2022. Since then have seen enormous growth in our program.

We currently have 91 students in the ECE AAS program and 100 total students registered for ECE courses. We are offering 7 courses this fall, with 10 total sections.



# What's worked?

## Updating course requirements and class scheduling:

- All courses offered in evening, hybrid, online & flex, 8 & 13-week schedules
- Math requirement dropped - built into ECE courses (worked with local 4-years)
- Incorporating Gateways competencies into CIFs

## Working with Navigators:

- Met monthly with Navigators beginning in February 2022
- Hosted Open House at Parkland CDC, invited 4-year institutions
- Collaborative meetings with Parkland Advising and Financial Aid
- Navigators presented at HS Open Houses
- Scholarship Night



# What's worked?

## Student services and supports:

- Coach/Mentor
  - All students meet individually at least once each semester with ECE Coach Mentor to review program progress, plan courses, etc.
  - Advising Nights each semester
- All students receive a laptop to keep
  - Must first complete online Digital Literacy Module
- Purchased all student textbooks for loan through Learning Commons
- Stipends available for costs not covered by ECACE Scholarship
- All students receive an NAEYC membership, and Teaching Young Children subscription

# What's worked?

## Outreach:

- Social media promotion
- Meeting with District 505 Family & Consumer Sciences teachers
- Parkland Child Development Center and campus tours for local Family & Consumer Sciences classes
- Attendance at community events
- Meetings with local public media education staff, United Way, Unit 4

## Equipment Investments/Additional Staff:


- Dedicated classroom with moveable furniture, equipment storage, sink, smartboard, etc.
- Replenishing books and supplies
- Added an adjunct who will take on some Coach/Mentor responsibilities

# What's ahead?

- Closer collaboration with Parkland Child Development Center
- Continued relationship with Navigators
  - What happens after July 1?
- Support for ESL students to join the program
  - Large local population of Spanish and French speakers working in childcare -  
How can we serve them?
- Increased engagement with high schools
- More messaging in community about importance of ECE profession - and need





The background is a complex, abstract composition of various colors and patterns. It includes large, organic shapes in shades of blue, green, and teal. There are also smaller, more geometric elements like a blue oval, a grey dotted area, and a teal area with a white grid of plus signs. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

ECACE  
Community of Practice:  
University Program Redesign

*Summer 2023*



# *What is a community of practice?*

- **Community** = an informal gathering of like minds (and hearts) focused on personal professional learning by sharing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives
- **Membership** = wanting to learn more, **do** more with what's learned by interacting with a focus
- **Practice** = the community's learning focus: actual program redesign at members' universities, for vetting during AY 23-24
- **Belonging to this community** = dedicating time and talent to building relationships with other members, trusting each other's commitment to establishing a shared knowledge base and professional practice principles

# ***Program Redesign Purpose***

Achieving the goal of PA  
102-0174: ECE Workforce  
Development

*Creating equitable and sustainable university pathways for incumbent workforce learners*

- **Acknowledging prior learning** acquired through working in the field
- Designing ECE program coursework and experiences that ensure **persistence and completion** of bachelor's degrees
- **Strengthening** AAS transfer pathways
- Building **flexible curricular road maps** enabling individualized completion
- Identifying and remedying internal as well as external **barriers to change**



## Special Interest Groups: Becoming Even More Workforce Friendly

- Determining best practices in **assessing prior learning** to award **course credit**
- **Modularizing** course curricula
- Embedding **competencies** into courses to ensure transfer and completion
- Offering courses for **variable credit** for individualized completion
- Others TBD, based on the CoP's burgeoning interests and needs



Let's talk~

*Q&A with Melissa and Marie*

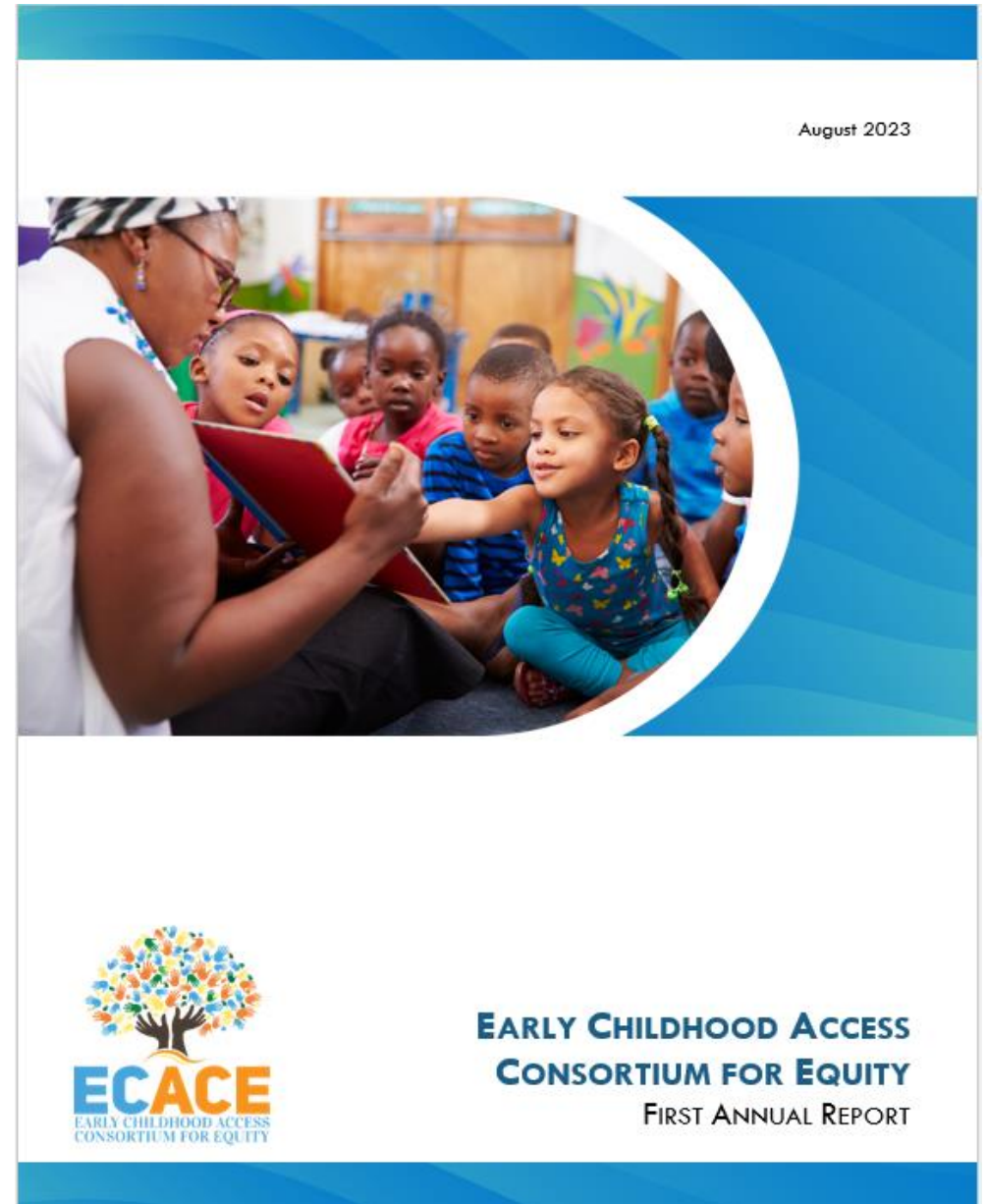
# Agency Updates

# First Annual Report

Launch and upstart of the ECACE Initiative  
from July 2021 – December 2022

Work of the:

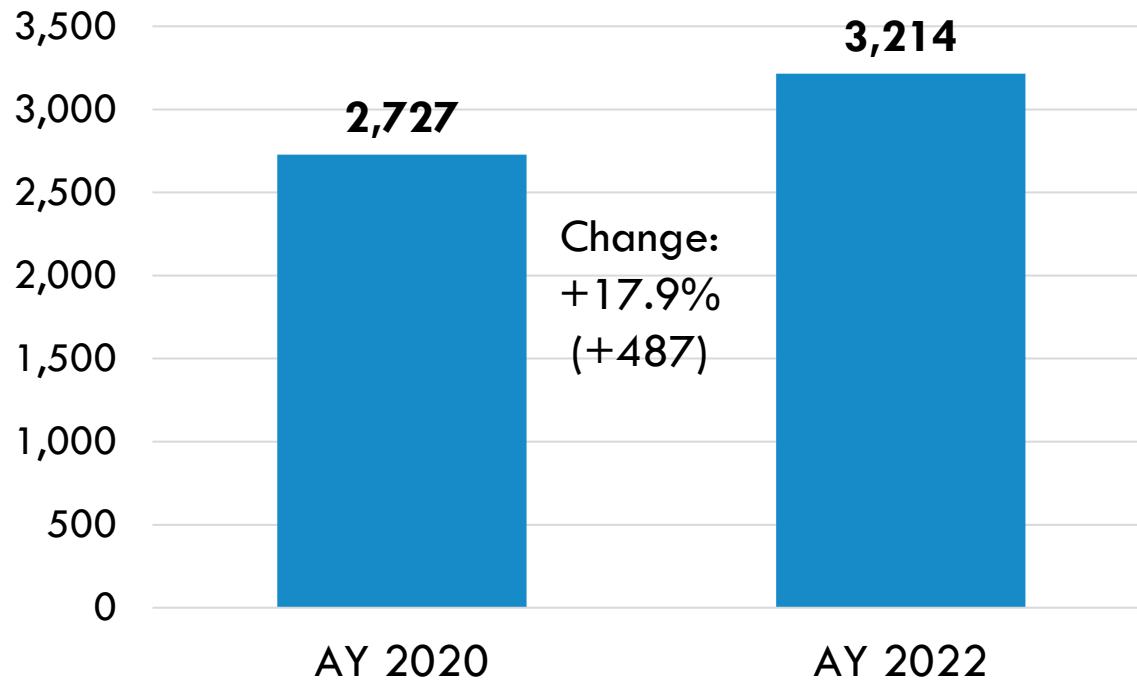
- Consortium to collectively develop policies that support working adults
- Colleges and universities to engage and support students, ensure smooth transfer pathways, and provide courses when, where, and how students need them.
- State to increase access to higher education through personalized assistance and financial supports



# Enrollment of the ECEC Incumbent Workforce, AY 2020 and AY 2022

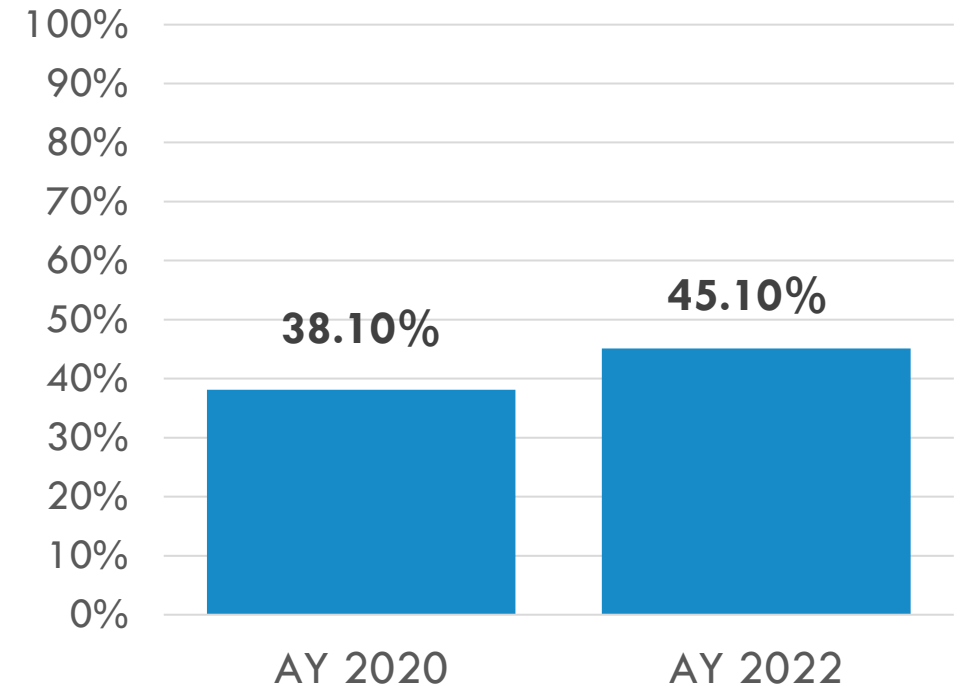
**Incumbent Enrollment Increased by 17.9%**

*Enrollment of the ECEC Workforce*



**Percent Incumbent Increased from 38% to 45%**

*ECEC Workforce, Percent of Overall Enrollment*





# Enrollment Changes By Race, AY 2020 and AY 2022

## Enrollment increased for:

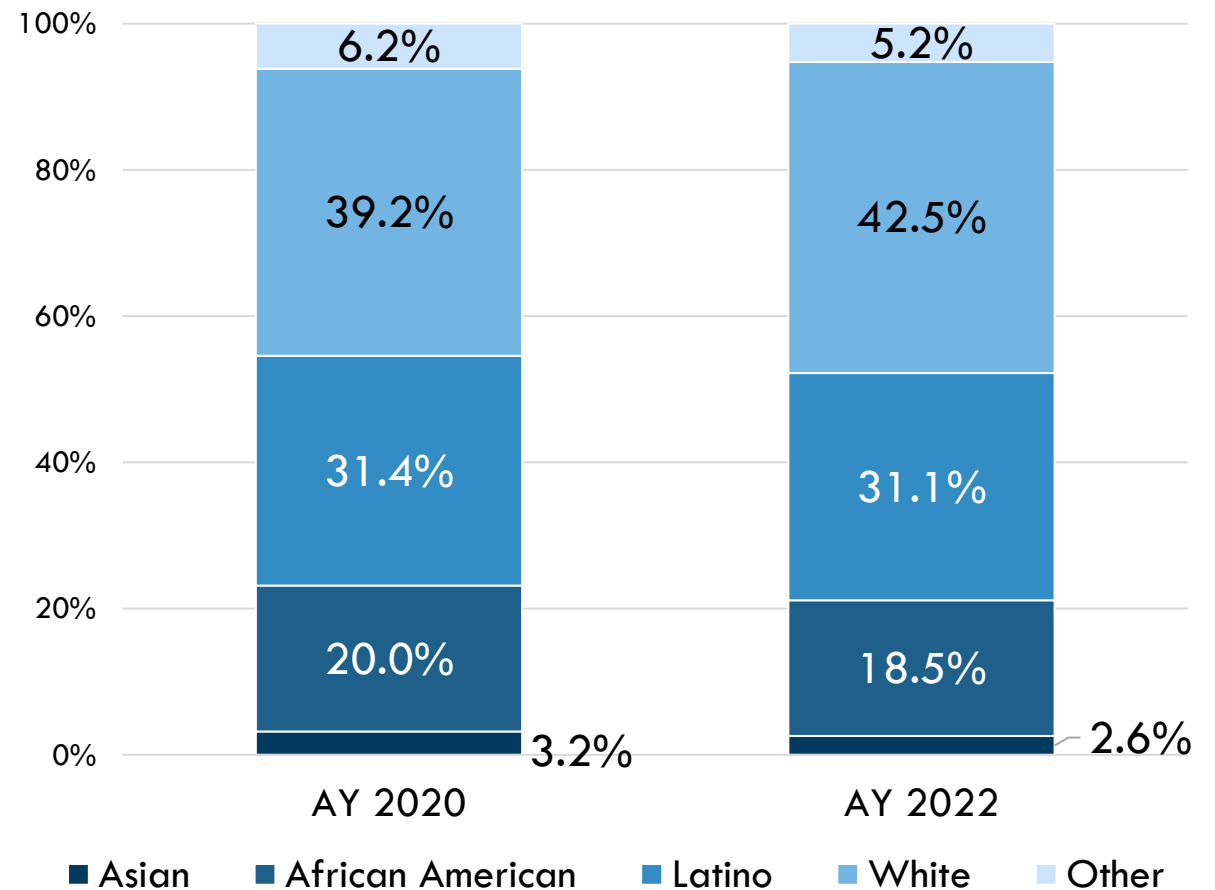
- White (+27.8%),
- Latino (16.7%)
- African American (9.4%)

## Enrollment decreased for:

- Asian (-4.6%)

There was a slight change in racial distribution.

*Race/Ethnicity Distribution of Enrolled Incumbent Members of the ECEC Workforce, AY 2020 and AY 2022*



# ECACE Scholarship

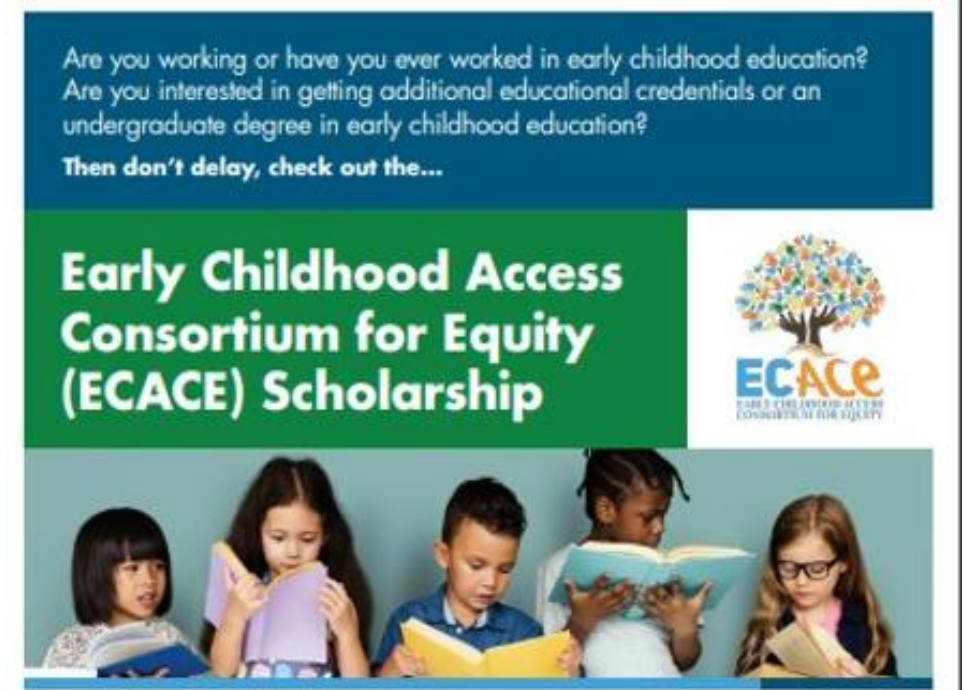
**What's Covered:** Tuition & fees and funding up to the full cost of attendance\*

## AY 2022: Soft Launch Year

- First awards in March 2022
- \$5.7M to 412 students



## AY 2023: July 2022 – December 2022

- \$7,068,593 **↑ 23%**
- Over 1,000 students **↑ 149%**



Are you working or have you ever worked in early childhood education?  
Are you interested in getting additional educational credentials or an undergraduate degree in early childhood education?  
Then don't delay, check out the...

**Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship**



# Community-based Navigators and College/University Mentors

30+ navigators support the workforce to go back to school through outreach and technical assistance. Support may include helping them feel confident that they will be successful.

From June 2022 – December 2022,  
Navigators:

- Sent nearly 50,000 emails
- Hosted over 700 information sessions
- Held over 1,600 meetings with workforce members to provide support

## Other Supports

- Writing tutors, sometimes embedded into courses
- Study groups – online and in person
- Content test prep and paying for practice (and real) tests
- Wrap around supports (child care, materials and supplies)
- Just in time and responsive interventions – tutors, mentoring, coaching
- Bilingual coaches
- Academic success plans
- General support to instill confidence, support students through family and life events, help students think about how to best tackle and balance work and school assignments

# Approval of Minutes

# Public Comment

# Closing Comments

Upcoming meetings:

In-Person Consortium	October 27, 2023, 10 –3
Advisory Meeting	November 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 1-3



Thank you!

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