Massachusetts FY25 state budget

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For full FY25 budget, see:
https://strategiesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FY25Budget.pdf
https://budget.digital.mass.gov/summary/fy25/

C3 formula and eligibility

SECTION 189. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of early education and care shall distribute operational grant funding for fiscal year 2025 through the following formula:

(i) providers with enrollment including at least 25 per cent of children receiving child care financial assistance, otherwise serving at least 25 per cent of low and at-risk children or head start or early head start program shall receive not less than 50.5 per cent of operational grant funding distributed in a fiscal year;

(ii) providers with enrollment including at least 1 per cent but less than 25 per cent of children receiving child care financial assistance shall receive not less than 28.4 per cent of operational grant funding distributed in a fiscal year; and

(iii) providers serving no children receiving child care financial assistance shall receive not more than 21.1 per cent of operational grant funding distributed in a fiscal year.

(b) A provider that is not an “eligible organization” as defined in section 18 of chapter 15D of the General Laws and that, directly or through an affiliate, operates more than 10 center-based programs in the commonwealth shall not receive more than 1 per cent of annual program funds unless the provider is granted a waiver by the commissioner deeming such allocation of more than 1 per cent to be in the best interest of the commonwealth.

iLottery and EEC funds

SECTION 9. Said chapter 10 is hereby further amended by striking out section 25, as so appearing, and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

Section 25. (a) The apportionment of the total revenues accruing from the sale of lottery tickets or shares and from all other sources at the point of sale at a licensed agent shall be as follows: (i) the payment of prizes to the holders of winning tickets or shares, which in any case shall be no less than 45 per cent of the total revenues accruing from the sale of lottery tickets; (ii) the payment of costs incurred in the operation and administration of the lottery, including the expenses of the commission and the costs resulting from any contract or contracts entered into for promotional, advertising or operational services or for the purchase or lease of lottery equipment and materials, which in no case shall exceed 15 per cent of the total revenues accruing from the sale of lottery tickets or shares, subject to appropriation; and (iii) the balance shall be used to fund budgeted aid to cities and towns as provided in section 18C of chapter 58, subject to appropriation.

(b) The apportionment of the total revenues accruing from the sale of lotteries conducted online, over the internet, through the use of a mobile application or through any other means as authorized by section 24 except for those enumerated in subsection (a) shall be as follows: (i) the payment of prizes to the holders of winning tickets or shares; (ii) the payment of costs incurred in the operation and administration of such lotteries, including the expenses of the commission and the costs resulting from any contract or contracts entered into for promotional, advertising or operational services or for the purchase or lease of lottery equipment and materials, which in no case shall exceed 5 per cent of the total revenues accruing from the sale of lottery tickets or shares; and (iii) the balance shall be transferred to the Early Education and Care Operational Grant Fund established in section 19 of chapter 15D.

ECE scholarship and loan forgiveness

SECTION 23. Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 19E the following 2 sections:-

Section 19F. (a) Subject to appropriation, the board shall, in consultation with the board of early education and care, establish an early education and care educator scholarship program for current and prospective early education and care sector educators. The program shall be administered by the board, in consultation with the board of early education and care, consistent with clause (10) of the second paragraph of section 5 of chapter 15D.

(b) To be eligible for the scholarship program, recipients shall demonstrate that they are either: (i) a current early education and care educator employed or seeking employment with an early education and care provider in the commonwealth; or (ii) a prospective early education and care educator who is enrolled in or has agreed to enroll in a certificate program or an associate, bachelor or graduate-level degree program in the early education and care field in the commonwealth; provided, however, that recipients of the scholarship program shall commit to providing early education and care in the commonwealth for a term of service to be determined by the board in consultation with the board of early education and care.

(c) Preference for scholarships shall be given to applicants identified as educators who have displayed a proven commitment to early childhood education or who are members of a socially or economically disadvantaged community.

(d) A scholarship granted pursuant to this section may be used to cover the cost of tuition, fees or course-related expenses, including, but not limited to, personal child care expenses incurred in order to attend classes and class meetings and other supports deemed appropriate by the board, in consultation with the board of early education and care, for current and prospective early education and care educators to obtain credentials or associate, bachelor or graduate-level degrees to meet the educator and program quality standards of the department of early education and care.

(e) The board, in consultation with the board of early education and care, shall promulgate regulations or guidelines governing the scholarship program, which shall include

procedures for repayment of the amount of scholarship benefits for a recipient who participates in the program but fails to complete the commitment under subsection (b) or other requirements.

Section 19G. (a) Subject to appropriation, the board shall, in consultation with the board of early education and care, establish an early education and care educator loan forgiveness program for early education and care educators pursuant to clause (10) of section 5 of chapter 15D. Preference for loan forgiveness shall be given to applicants identified as early education and care educators in the commonwealth who have displayed a proven commitment to early childhood education and who either: (i) work in communities predominantly serving children and families with high needs; or (ii) work in regions with a shortage of early education and care slots.

(b) The board, in consultation with the board of early education and care, shall promulgate regulations or guidelines necessary to implement this section, which shall include procedures for default of the loan forgiveness program for a recipient who participates in the program but fails to complete the commitment or other requirements.

Establishing a schedule for revising rates and sliding scale fees

SECTION 26. The second paragraph of section 2 of chapter 15D of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out clause (e) and inserting in place thereof the following clause:-

(e) establish and develop a schedule for revising: (1) a rate structure for voucher and contracted payments to early education and care providers that enroll children receiving child care financial assistance, which shall be informed by the cost of providing high-quality early education and care to such children in conformity with federal and state laws, regulations and quality and safety standards and any other relevant factors; and (2) a sliding fee scale for families receiving child care financial assistance, which shall be updated within 1 year of the department expanding income eligibility for the child care financial assistance program under subsection (e) of section 13A, or not less than every 5 years, whichever occurs first, to reflect affordability standards for participating families; provided, however, that recipients of child care financial assistance whose income is not more than 100 per cent of the federal poverty level shall not be charged fees for care; provided further, that the sliding fee scale shall be implemented by applying the scale to the amount that a family's income exceeds 100 per cent of the federal poverty level; provided further, that recipients of child care financial assistance shall not be charged fees for care that exceed 7 per cent of the family's total income; provided further, that prior to the establishment or revision of the rate structure or sliding fee scale, the department shall hold a public hearing under chapter 30A on such establishment or revisions and the board shall approve such establishment or revision; and provided further, that the department shall submit any proposed rate structure or sliding scale fee to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives not less than 60 days prior to implementation.

Data advisory committee

SECTION 27. Said section 2 of said chapter 15D, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by adding the following 2 clauses:-

(v) in consultation with the data advisory commission established in section 12B, annually collect data, to the extent feasible, on: (1) the number of for-profit organizations that own or franchise centers in multiple states and operate center-based programs in the commonwealth; (2) the number of center-based programs that are not programs pursuant to subclause (1); (3) the number of early education and care providers serving children and families; (4) the number of employees at early education and care providers, delineated by job position and full-time or part-time designation; (5) pay rates and employer-paid benefits for employees at early education and care providers, delineated by job position and full-time or part-time designation; (6) tuition charged by early education and care providers for full and part-time early education and care, delineated by age group and region; (7) the number of children enrolled by early education and care providers, delineated by region, age, type of care, family income range, race, ethnicity, country of origin, disability status, receipt of early intervention services, primary language of the household and the number of adults in the household; (8) the number of children receiving child care financial assistance, delineated by region, age, family income, race, ethnicity, country of origin, disability status, receipt of early intervention services, primary language of the household and number of adults in the household; (9) the total cost of child care financial assistance provided by the department; (10) the average monthly number of utilized and unutilized contracted slots and vouchers, delineated by region and type of care; and (11) the average monthly number of children on the department's waitlist for child care financial assistance, delineated by region, age, type of care, family income range, race, ethnicity, country of origin, disability status, receipt of early intervention services, primary language of the household and number of adults in the household; provided, however, that the department shall include a summary of the data collected pursuant to this clause in the department's annual report required pursuant to subsection (g) of section 3; and

(w) develop, maintain and disseminate a written early education and care informational

guide, accessible through the department's website and available in multiple languages, containing resources for parents of newborns, including, but not limited to: (1) information on the short and long-term developmental benefits of a quality early education and care curriculum; (2) the department's role in licensing providers and conducting background record checks and the differences between licensed and unlicensed providers; (3) child care financial assistance eligibility requirements and application process; and (4) the website for families to access an online directory, searchable by geographic location, of licensed child care programs across the commonwealth; provided, however, that the department shall disseminate the guide at accessible locations, including, but not limited to: (A) public libraries; (B) family resource centers; (C) hospitals with maternity services; and (D) birthing centers.

SECTION 28. The first paragraph of subsection (g) of section 3 of said chapter 15D, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following 2 sentences:- The report shall summarize data collected pursuant to clause (v) of the second paragraph of section 2 and shall provide information and examples on barriers to collecting data required pursuant to said clause (v). The report shall summarize data collected for the operational grant program established pursuant to section 20.

Child care financial assistance

SECTION 32. Said chapter 15D is hereby further amended by inserting after section 13 the following section:-

Section 13A. (a) The department shall maintain, subject to appropriation, a child care financial assistance program that shall provide sufficient financial assistance to enable eligible families to afford and access high-quality early education and care for infants, toddlers, preschool-age children and school-age children.

(b) The department shall provide child care financial assistance to support early education and care through means which shall include, but shall not be limited to: (i) providing vouchers for payments to early education and care providers of a family's choosing; and (ii) offering families the option of an open slot with an early education and care provider that is contracted with the department; provided, however, that an eligible family shall receive only 1 type of support for each eligible child. Reimbursement for vouchers and contracted payments to early education and care providers that enroll children receiving child care financial assistance shall be based on enrollment; provided, however, that enrollment shall be measured by the department using quarterly enrollment averages or if deemed appropriate by the department, enrollment averages less frequent than quarterly.

(c) Child care financial assistance may be used for early education and care provided by public, private, nonprofit and for-profit entities licensed or approved by the department including, but not limited to, preschools, child care centers, nursery schools, before-school programs, after-school programs, out-of-school time programs, Head Start programs, Early Head Start programs, informal child care providers and independent and system-affiliated family child care homes. As a condition for receiving child care financial assistance from the department under this section, an early education and care provider shall enter into and comply with a contract with the department or its agents. The department shall develop the contract which shall include a requirement that the early education and care provider comply with all applicable requirements of this chapter and any other federal or state requirements necessary to receive funding for child care financial assistance provided to families under this section.

(d) The department shall provide child care financial assistance to: (i) families with a child who has an open case at the department of children and families or families with a child who is otherwise referred by the department of children and families; (ii) families currently involved with, or transitioning from, transitional aid to families with dependent children, including: (A) recipients of transitional aid to families with dependent children benefits; (B) former recipients of transitional aid to families with dependent children benefits who are working or are engaged in an approved service need activity for up to 1 year after termination of their benefits; (C) participants who are working or are engaged in an approved service need activity for up to 1 year after the transitional period; (D) parents who are under 18 years of age who are currently enrolled in a job training program and who would qualify for benefits under chapter 118 if not for the consideration of the income of the minor parents' legal guardians or parents; and (E) recipients of the supplemental nutrition assistance program who are participating in education and training services approved by the department of transitional assistance; and (iii) families in need of early education and care services whose family income is not more than 85 per cent of the state median income; provided, however, that the department shall promulgate regulations to ensure that priority shall be given to families: (A) whose family income is not more than 50 per cent of the state median income; (B) in which a parent or caregiver is working in the field of early education and care subject to rules or regulations set by the department; (C) with children who have a documented disability and whose family income is not more than 85 per cent of the state median income; (D) who are experiencing homelessness; (E) who are headed by a young parent as determined by the department; and (F) experiencing domestic violence.

(e) If additional funds are available or the federal government obligates itself to release additional funding to expand access to child care services beyond those reasonably sufficient to fund subsection (d), the department shall, in a manner consistent with any requirements placed on the receipt or expenditure of the relevant federal funds, allocate funding to increase the number of families receiving child care financial assistance based on income eligibility in the following order of priority to provide child care financial assistance to: (i) families eligible under said clause (iii) of said subsection (d); (ii) families in need of child care services whose family

income is above 85 per cent, but not more than 100 per cent, of the state median income; (iii) families in need of child care services whose family income is above 100 per cent, but not more than 110 per cent, of the state median income; and (iv) families in need of child care services whose family income is not more than 125 per cent of the state median income.

(f) If a school-age child is receiving child care financial assistance, the assistance shall continue until the end of the school year even if the child reaches the maximum age prior to the last day of the school year.

(g) For the purposes of child care financial assistance eligibility, “family income” shall include the income of parents living with the child receiving child care financial assistance but shall not include: (i) any form of income of foster parents, caregivers or other adult family members; (ii) income of siblings who are not receiving child care financial assistance; or (iii) earned income of any minor child.

To the extent allowable under federal laws and regulation, no child care financial assistance provided under this section shall be counted as income or assets for the purpose of disqualifying any person from eligibility for any other government benefit for which the person is otherwise eligible including, but not limited to, transitional aid to families with dependent children benefits.

(h) The department or its agents shall not reduce, terminate or deny continued child care financial assistance to a family based solely on family income unless the income exceeds 85 per cent of the state median income or the income eligibility threshold for currently eligible families as prioritized in subsection (e), whichever is higher. If a family is determined to be ineligible for financial assistance, the family shall be given an opportunity for an administrative review. If the department or its agents, after such administrative review, reduce, terminate or deny a family’s child care financial assistance, the department shall provide the family with an opportunity for an administrative appeal hearing and shall process the appeal within 60 days from the date the request is made. Subject to department rules and regulations, while an administrative review or, if applicable, an administrative appeal hearing is pending and until a final determination is made, services supported by child care financial assistance shall continue after receipt of a notice of reduction, termination or denial of continued child care financial assistance.

(i) The department shall review the child care financial assistance program not less than annually to identify access barriers to families and opportunities to improve families' experiences with the child care financial assistance process, including, but not limited to, department paperwork and verification requirements. The department shall take action to remove any access barriers, including, but not limited to: (i) making technological improvements; (ii) streamlining the application and renewal processes; (iii) improving outreach to potentially eligible families regarding the availability of child care financial assistance and the application process; and (iv) improving access for families with limited English proficiency.

(j) Annually, not later than February 15, the department shall file a report to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education on the child care financial assistance program including, but not limited to: (i) the number of applications received; (ii) the numbers of applications denied, delineated by reason for denial; (iii) the number of administrative reviews requested, delineated by reasons for ineligibility as determined by the department; (iv) the number of administrative reviews performed, delineated by reversal, reduction, termination and denial of child care financial assistance and length of time in which a decision was made; and (v) the number of administrative appeal hearings, delineated by the administrative appeal hearing decisions and length of time in which a decision was made. The report shall be made publicly available on the department's website.

(k) The department shall promulgate regulations necessary to implement this section.

FCC definition

SECTION 33. Subsection (a) of section 17 of said chapter 15D, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the definitions of “Family child care provider” and “Family child care services” and inserting in place thereof the following 2 definitions:-

“Family child care provider”, a person who provides family child care services on behalf of children receiving child care financial assistance and receives payment from the commonwealth for such services under a rate structure for voucher and contracted payments.

“Family child care services”, child care services provided for less than 24 hours per day in the residence of the provider on behalf of children receiving child care financial assistance for which payment from the commonwealth is made under a rate structure for voucher and contracted payments.

SECTION 34. Subsection (b) of said section 17 of said chapter 15D, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the fifth sentence the following sentence:- Deductions may further be made under said sections 17A, 17G and 17J of said chapter 180 from payments received by family child care providers through grants received under section 19; provided, however, that notwithstanding subsection (g), with the exception of dispute resolution procedures regarding grant payment errors, the distribution, disbursement or allocation amounts or formulas of said grants shall not be the subject of negotiation or collective bargaining.

SECTION 35. Said section 17 of said chapter 15D, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 76, the words “low-income and other at-risk children” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- children receiving financial assistance.

Early Education and Care Operational Grant Fund, Career Ladder

SECTION 36. Said chapter 15D is hereby further amended by adding the following 3 sections:-

Section 19. (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate, non-budgeted special revenue fund known as the Early Education and Care Operational Grant Fund, which shall be administered by the department. Amounts credited to the fund shall be expended, subject to appropriation, to provide a funding stream to support the operational grant program for early education and care providers in the commonwealth established pursuant to section 20. The unexpended balance in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall remain available for expenditure in subsequent fiscal years. The fund shall not be subject to section 5C of chapter 29.

(b) The fund shall be credited with: (i) revenue received pursuant to clause (iii) of subsection (b) of section 25 of chapter 10; (ii) other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund; (iii) funds from public and private sources, including, but not limited to, gifts, grants and donations; and (iv) interest earned on such money.

Section 20. (a) The department shall, subject to appropriation, establish, distribute and maintain an operational grant program for early education and care providers to provide high-quality and sustainable education and care.

(b) Eligible uses for operational grants shall include, but not be limited to: (i) compensating early education and care provider staff through increased salaries, benefits, bonuses, professional development or access to continuing education opportunities; (ii) increasing the affordability of early education and care to families, including by reducing the tuition and fees paid by families or offering scholarships to families; (iii) enabling early education and care providers to provide high-quality early education and care and to comply with applicable health, safety, educational and quality-assurance requirements, any other requirements of this chapter, and requirements imposed by the department consistent with this chapter; (iv) improving facilities and physical spaces used by the providers; (v) enabling early education and care providers to purchase high-quality, evidence-based early literacy materials; (vi) enabling

685 providers to address emergency situations during which the cost of care significantly increases
686 due to additional federal, state or department requirements or the loss of fees due to absence or
687 unenrollment that jeopardizes early education and care providers' ability to retain their facilities
688 and staff; (vii) enabling early education and care providers to expand hours of operation to meet
689 the needs of children and families; and (viii) enabling early education and care providers to
690 maintain or increase capacity to provide voluntary supplemental services to enrolled children and
691 their families including, but not limited to, social work services, health and disability-related
692 services and support services to parents and caregivers.
693 (c) The department shall maintain a formula for distributing operational grants to early
694 education and care providers, which shall give preference to providers that serve: (i) high
695 numbers of children receiving child care financial assistance or services from head start and early
696 head start programs; (ii) high numbers of high needs children; and (iii) unique populations or that
697 otherwise advance the interests of the program as determined by the department. The formula
698 shall consider: (i) licensed capacity and enrollment including the ages of the children enrolled
699 and the ages of the children for whom the provider has capacity; provided, however, that
700 enrollment shall be measured by the department using quarterly enrollment averages or if
701 deemed appropriate by the department, enrollment averages less frequent than quarterly; (ii)
702 costs associated with employee compensation, including salaries and benefits; (iii) the number of
703 enrolled children receiving child care financial assistance, services from head start and early
704 head start programs or scholarship assistance or other meaningful financial assistance from an
705 early education and care provider; (iv) to the extent feasible, the demographics and income of
706 families served, including the number of children enrolled and identified as high needs; (v) the
707 cost of goods and services necessary for provider operations, including rent, utilities,
708 maintenance and facility improvements; (vi) the cost of quality care methodology developed by
709 the department and, until such time as the methodology is established, any available information
710 regarding the cost of quality early education and care, including available credentialing
711 frameworks and applicable salary guidelines; (vii) increasing the financial stability of providers
712 in need; (viii) the business structure of providers; and (ix) any other factors impacting the cost of
713 providing quality early education and care including, but not limited to, serving infants and

toddlers, providing nonstandard hours of care and providing care in socially and economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented communities with shortages of early education and care slots. A provider that is not an “eligible organization” as defined in section 18 and that, directly or through an affiliate, operates more than 10 center-based programs in the commonwealth shall not receive more than 1 per cent of annual program funds unless the provider is granted a waiver by the commissioner deeming such allocation of more than 1 per cent to be in the best interest of the commonwealth. The department shall incorporate geographic equity into the development of the distribution formula.

Annually, the department shall review and update the operational grant formula to ensure equity and effectiveness in the financial sustainability of early education and care providers. Prior to the establishment or a revision of the operation grant formula, the department shall conduct a public hearing under chapter 30A and submit the proposed updates to the board for its approval.

(c1/2) To prioritize low-income and at-risk children, the department shall annually ensure not less than 50.5 per cent of operational grant funding distributed in a fiscal year is disbursed to: (i) providers with enrollment of at least 25 per cent of children receiving child care financial assistance or otherwise serving at least 25 per cent of low and at-risk children; or (ii) head start or early head start programs.

(d) As a condition for receiving operational grants under this section, the department shall require early education and care providers to: (i) enter into and comply with contractual agreements with the department or its agents, which shall be developed by the department; (ii) continue to, or demonstrate a willingness to, enroll children receiving child care financial assistance, if a family receiving child care financial assistance chooses the provider and the provider has an available opening; (iii) demonstrate progress towards increasing salary, compensation and benefits in alignment with the career ladder established in section 21, and if not feasible, provide increased salaries, compensation and benefits to the extent possible; and (iv) provide the department with data that the department requires, as needed to carry out the department’s assessment and reporting requirements under this section. The department shall solicit public comments prior to establishing or revising criteria for eligible recipients of the

operational grant program.

(e) Operational grants shall, subject to appropriation and the distribution formula developed under subsection (c), be renewed for each provider; provided, however, that renewal shall not be required if there is a change in circumstances for the provider making them ineligible, the provider is not in compliance with this section or if the department, in its discretion, determines that renewal would not be appropriate.

(f) The department shall establish enforceable compliance standards to ensure the integrity of the program. The standards shall ensure that open slots in early education and care providers that receive operational grants are accessible to children receiving child care financial assistance and that recipients are making meaningful progress towards complying with the career ladder standards established in section 21; provided, however, that a provider that is not an "eligible organization" as defined in section 18 of and that, directly or through an affiliate, operates more than 10 center-based programs in the commonwealth and receives operational grants shall: (i) demonstrate a willingness to accept more children receiving child care financial assistance at each program location operated by the provider or an affiliate of the provider in proportion to the provider's size, as determined by the department; (ii) dedicate a certain percentage of the provider's operational grant funds, as determined by the department, to increasing compensation for their early education educators and make meaningful progress towards complying with the department's career ladder; and (iii) annually provide the department with an audited financial statement detailing how the provider's operational grant funds are spent. Prior to establishing or revising standards, the department shall solicit public input.

(g) The department shall include information on the status of the operational grant program in the department's annual report required by subsection (g) of section 3. This information shall include, but not be limited to: (i) a description of the distribution formula; (ii) an analysis of the incorporation of equity into the distribution formula; (iii) an analysis of the demographic data of the families served by recipients of operational grants; (iv) an analysis of how recipients are using operational grants; (v) an analysis of the impact of the operational grant program on supporting provider sustainability, increasing the availability of early education and care slots, supporting the early education and care workforce, assisting providers with complying

with the career ladder established under section 21 and improving access to, and the affordability of, high-quality early education and care; (vi) an analysis of the impact that the termination of the operational grant program would have on the commonwealth; (vii) if applicable, recommendations on how the program could be modified to most effectively direct grant funding to providers serving families with the greatest needs; and (viii) if applicable, recommendations on how to amend the distribution formula to maximize the goals of educational equity, school readiness and optimal results for families with the greatest needs. The department shall publicly post on its website the amount of operational grants awarded, delineated by the name of each recipient and by the municipality in which the recipient is located.

Career Ladder

Section 21. (a) The department shall maintain an early education and care career ladder as considered under clause (11) of the second paragraph of section 5.

(b) The career ladder shall include, but not be limited to: (i) minimum recommended salaries and compensation for each level of the career ladder that are commensurate with the salaries of public school teachers with equivalent education, credentials and training required for a position; (ii) minimum recommended benefits for early education and care provider staff including, but not limited to, health insurance, retirement benefits, paid vacation and other leave time; and (iii) recommendations for linking professional development and educational credentials to increased compensation and leadership opportunities in early education and care. Prior to establishing or revising the career ladder, the department shall solicit public input.

(c) The department shall review the career ladder's compensation structure and benefits guidelines annually and update them, as needed, based on increased cost of living or any other factors deemed relevant by the department to determine appropriate compensation for the field.

Cost of quality care, methodology

SECTION 182. Not later than October 31, 2024, the department of early education and care shall submit a report to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education on a proposed methodology to calculate and assess the cost of providing high-quality early education and care. The methodology shall take into consideration the full cost of service delivery including, but not limited to, costs that vary based on: (i) geographic region; (ii) early education and care provider type and size; (iii) the age ranges of children served; (iv) group size and ratios; (v) the demographics of the populations served by early education and care providers; and (vi) costs of additional services to children and families with high needs, including staff and staff training necessary to accommodate children with disabilities or other high needs, interpreter services, mental health supports for children and staff and staff time required to provide comprehensive family engagement and services to ensure effective early education and promote multigenerational success.

In developing the methodology, the department shall consider the factors that affect the cost of service delivery including, but not limited to: (i) administration; (ii) staff pay and benefits; (iii) professional development and instructional coaching; (iv) operations and maintenance including, but not limited to, rent, equipment, technology, furniture and utility costs; (v) educational supplies and curricula; (vi) food services; and (vii) transportation services. The department shall include in its report: (i) recommendations to annually assess and update the methodology to ensure continued alignment with the cost of providing high-quality early education and care and compliance with federal regulations; and (ii) recommendations regarding the use of the methodology to inform the development of child care financial assistance reimbursement rates under clause (e) of the second paragraph of section 2 of said chapter 15D of the General Laws and the distribution formula for the operational grant program established in section 19 of said chapter 15D.

Employer supports: best practices, benefits, and incentives

SECTION 183. (a) Not later than June 30, 2025, the executive office of labor and workforce development, in consultation with the department of early education and care and the executive office of economic development, shall conduct a study and make recommendations in a report to be filed with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education. The report shall include, but not be limited to: (i) identifying and promoting employer best practices; (ii) exploring employer incentives to support additional early education and care benefits for their employees; (iii) examining the availability of state partnerships with the business community to support employees who have young children; (iv) exploring ways to improve collaboration across secretariats of state agencies to engage with the business community; (v) considering incentives or requirements for employers of a certain size or specific subgroups of employers to provide employer-supported early education and care benefits to employees; and (vi) considering the feasibility of assessing all or certain employers to fund expanded access to high quality, affordable early education and care. Prior to making its recommendations, the executive office of labor and workforce development shall meet with regionally-diverse stakeholders

Reporting deadlines: C3 formula and career ladder

SECTION 184. Not later than January 15, 2025, the department of early education and care shall submit to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education a preliminary report on the implementation and effects of the updated operational grant funding formula established pursuant to section 189 of this act and section 20 of chapter 15D of the General Laws and consistent with the reporting requirements of subsection (d) of said section 20 of said chapter 15D.

SECTION 185. The department of early education and care shall establish the first early education and care career ladder pursuant to section 21 of chapter 15D of the General Laws not later than October 31, 2024.

Family, friend and neighbor care

SECTION 186. Not later than January 1, 2025, the department of early education and care shall submit a report to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education relative to family, friend and neighbor care, which shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the feasibility of implementing and overseeing a family, friend and neighbor care network; (ii) the department structures necessary to evaluate and support a family, friend and neighbor care network; (iii) the sustainability of said network; and (iv) any legislative changes necessary to carry out the recommendations. Prior to reporting its findings, the department shall consult with Community Labor United Inc.'s Care That Works pilot program, New England United for Justice, Inc., Service Employees International Union, Local 509 and Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Inc.

EEOST Capital Fund

SECTION 187. Not later than December 31, 2025, the department of early education and care, in consultation with the Children's Investment Fund, Inc. and the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation, shall file a report with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education detailing proposed improvements to the Early Education and Out of School Time Capital Fund established in section 18 of chapter 15D of the General Laws. The report shall include, but not be limited to: (i) proposed grant eligibility criteria; (ii) proposed size of grants; (iii) proposed ways to streamline the application process; (iv) any other parameters to increase the impact of the fund and ensure that funds reach intended recipients; and (v) any data available on unmet needs for early education and care facilities improvements.

Multi-site for-profit C3 reporting

SECTION 188. Not later than February 28, 2025, the department of early education and care shall file a report on the impact and utilization of operational grant funding program established under section 189 of this act and section 20 of chapter 15D of the General Laws by multi-site, for-profit center-based child care providers who receive operational grants. The report shall be filed with the clerks of senate and the house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on education. The report shall include information about:

(i) the number of such entities that operate multi-site center-based programs in the commonwealth and the number of sites operated;

(ii) the number and percent of children served in such programs;

(iii) an analysis of the amount of grant funding distributed to each early education and care provider, including data on grant spending delineated by category of spending;

(iv) an analysis of the operations of such providers in other states, including an analysis of the impact, if any, on capacity and tuition costs for such providers when states exhausted COVID-19-related supplemental Child Care Development Fund funding; and

(iv) Any other information deemed necessary by the department to inform future formula adjustments to operational grants.

Workforce pipeline

SECTION 192. (a) The department of early education and care, in consultation with the executive office of labor and workforce development, the commonwealth corporation and the early education and care workforce council, established in section 79 of chapter 154 of the acts of 2018, shall conduct a study and submit a report making recommendations to: (i) enhance the early education and care workforce pipeline; and (ii) develop strategies and prioritization of programming and funding opportunities to ensure that the early educator workforce meets the needs of the commonwealth.

(b) The report shall include, but shall not be limited to, recommendations on: (i) recruiting new early education and care providers; (ii) developing apprenticeship programs and non-traditional recruitment opportunities as part of a curriculum-based service-learning program; (iii) collaborating with early education and care providers and vocational schools with curricula that include early education and care; (iv) retaining early educators; (v) incentivizing the development of family child care providers; and (vi) exploring the potential for the growth of family child care providers into center-based programs.

(c) The department of early education and care shall file the report, along with any recommendations, with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on education and the joint committee on labor and workforce development not later than June 30, 2025. The report shall be made publicly available on the websites of the department of early education and care and the executive office of labor and workforce development.