



Governors Propose Nearly \$3 Billion of Investments in Early Learning Programs

By Steven Jessen-Howard | May 15, 2019

In 2018, a commitment to improving child care and other early childhood programs helped many gubernatorial candidates win election.¹ With significant majorities of Republican, Democratic, and independent voters supporting increased funding for early learning, it's no wonder that early childhood was a winning issue.² Now, those campaign promises are turning into action as governors unveil their budget proposals.³ A Center for American Progress analysis of the latest budget proposals of governors from 49 states⁴—as well as the mayor of Washington, D.C.—reveals that the nation's governors have proposed a combined \$2.9 billion in new state funding for child care, preschool, and home visiting programs. This number is almost one-third of federal yearly spending on Head Start, and more than seven times that of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, demonstrating governors' strong commitment to improving early childhood programs.

The need to invest in early learning

Investments in young children are among the most important that states can make because they support early childhood development, parent employment, and economic growth. The first years of life are a period of rapid brain development, and the experiences that children have during this critical period can shape future learning.⁵ When children have access to high-quality early learning experiences, they are more likely to be ready for kindergarten, to graduate high school, and to ultimately go to college.⁶

In addition, investments in early childhood benefit family economic security and economic growth. Two-thirds of young children have all parents in the workforce, making child care a necessity.⁷ Yet many parents end up spending a considerable portion of their paycheck on child care, which can amount to more than \$10,000 per year for just one child. Policies that defray child care costs can boost employment and economic growth. For example, the universal pre-K program in Washington, D.C., spurred a 10 percentage point increase in its maternal labor force participation rate.⁸ One estimate of a large-scale federal child care investment found that it would create 700,000 new

early educator jobs and allow 1.6 million mothers to rejoin the workforce.⁹ As states' chief executives, governors have the responsibility and power to shape their state's economic agenda; accordingly, they should make child care an important piece of promoting workforce participation and economic security for families.

Analysis of budget proposals

CAP's analysis of governors' most recent budget proposals found that 32 governors and District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser (D) proposed a total of \$2.9 billion in additional state funds for early care and education programs. Funding is proposed for a range of programs, such as expanding the number of families reached by home visiting programs; constructing new child care facilities; expanding full-day kindergarten; increasing the value and reach of child care subsidies; and more.

TABLE 1
The majority of U.S. governors propose increased funding for early learning
 New state investments for early learning programs in governors' budget proposals

State	Governor	Proposed new state investments in early learning	Dollars per child under age 6
Alabama	Kay Ivey (R)	\$35 M	\$99.89
Alaska	Mike Dunleavy (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Arizona	Doug Ducey (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Arkansas	Asa Hutchinson (R)	\$0.8 M	\$3.60
California	Gavin Newsom (D)	\$1,662.4 M	\$556.95
Colorado	Jared Polis (D)	\$240 M	\$595.30
Connecticut	Ned Lamont (D)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Delaware	John Carney (D)	\$3.8 M	\$75.21
Florida	Ron DeSantis (R)	\$7 M	\$5.29
Georgia	Brian Kemp (R)	\$11.4 M	\$14.38
Hawaii	David Ige (D)	\$15.8 M	\$145.35
Idaho	Brad Little (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Illinois	J.B. Pritzker (D)	\$130 M	\$138.03
Indiana	Eric Holcomb (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Iowa	Kim Reynolds (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Kansas	Laura Kelly (D)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Kentucky	Matt Bevin (R)	\$2.1M	\$6.37
Louisiana	John Bel Edwards (D)	\$13.5 M	\$36.52

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TABLE 1 CONT'D

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New state investments for early learning programs in governors' budget proposals

State	Governor	Proposed new state investments in early learning	Dollars per child under age 6
Maine	Janet Mills (D)	\$3.6 M	\$45.66
Maryland	Larry Hogan (R)	\$21.2 M	\$48.26
Massachusetts	Charlie Baker (R)	\$0.4 M	\$0.96
Michigan	Gretchen Whitmer (D)	\$89.8 M	\$130.61
Minnesota	Tim Walz (D)	\$45.5 M	\$108.44
Mississippi	Phil Bryant (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Missouri	Mike Parson (R)	\$3.9 M	\$8.73
Montana	Steve Bullock (D)	\$14.9 M	\$199.80
Nebraska	Pete Ricketts (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Nevada	Steve Sisolak (D)	\$22.4 M	\$103.67
New Hampshire	Chris Sununu (R)	\$0.3M	\$3.82
New Jersey	Phil Murphy (D)	\$68.4 M	\$107.89
New Mexico	Michelle Lujan Grisham (D)	\$67 M	\$424.24
New York	Andrew Cuomo (D)	\$41 M	\$29.36
North Carolina	Roy Cooper (D)	\$47.9 M	\$65.71
North Dakota	Doug Burgum (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Ohio	Mike DeWine (R)	\$15 M	\$18.00
Oklahoma	Kevin Stitt (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Oregon	Kate Brown (D)	\$111.6 M	\$402.45
Pennsylvania	Tom Wolf (D)	\$57 M	\$66.66
Rhode Island	Gina Raimondo (D)	\$10 M	\$151.93
South Carolina	Henry McMaster (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
South Dakota	Kristi Noem (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Tennessee	Bill Lee (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Texas	Greg Abbott (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Utah	Gary Herbert (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00
Vermont	Phil Scott (R)	\$7 M	\$194.70
Virginia	Ralph Northam (D)	\$5 M	\$8.17
Washington	Jay Inslee (D)	\$101.8 M	\$189.39
Washington, D.C.	Mayor Muriel Bowser (D)	\$67.5 M	\$1,014.87
West Virginia	Jim Justice (R)	\$0 M	\$0.00

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TABLE 1 CONT'D

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New state investments for early learning programs in governors' budget proposals

State	Governor	Proposed new state investments in early learning	Dollars per child under age 6
Wisconsin	Tony Evers (D)	\$7.5 M	\$18.28
Wyoming	Mark Gordon (R)	N/A	N/A
Total		\$2930.7 M	\$123.05

Note: This analysis only considers funding explicitly designated for early child care, preschool, full-day kindergarten, and home visiting programs, or funding allocated specifically to help individuals pay for these services. The continuation of existing funding and inflation adjustments are not counted. The numbers presented in the table for proposed new state investments are rounded to the nearest tenth. States with proposed decreases in funding are presented as 0. Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon has not yet released a budget proposal. See the appendix for more details on methodology, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=469672>.

Sources: Author's analysis of state budgets accessed through National Association of State Budget Officers, "Proposed & Enacted Budget Links," available at <https://www.nasbo.org/mainsite/resources/proposed-enacted-budgets> (last accessed April 2019); author's analysis of Arkansas state budget. This budget was received through personal communication with the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration via email, April 2, 2019, on file with author. Additional sources: KIDS COUNT Data Center, "Child population by age group in the United States: 2017," available at <https://data-center.kidscount.org/data/tables/101-child-population-by-age-group?loc=1&loc=2#detailed/2/2-53/false/871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/62,63,64,64693/419,420> (last accessed April 2019); Martin Austerhuhle, "In Effort To Bring Down Child Care Costs, Boswer Proposes Three New Centers for Kids," WAMU 88.5, March 21, 2019, available at <https://wamu.org/story/19/03/21/in-effort-to-bring-down-child-care-costs-boswer-proposes-three-new-centers-for-kids/>; Florida Policy Institute, "First Look at Governor's FY 2019-20 Budget Proposal: Important Steps Forward in Affordable Housing, Conservation and Transportation but Still Room for Improvement" (Orlando, FL: 2019), available at <https://www.fpi.institute/first-look-at-governors-fy-2019-20-budget-proposal/>; Nevada Department of Education, "The Executive Budget—Department Budgets: 2020-2021 Biennium," January 22, 2019, available at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Document/13814>; Office of Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan, "Budget for One Minnesota: Education," available at https://mn.gov/governor/assets/Education_Budget%20Fact%20Sheet_tcm1055-376739.pdf (last accessed May 2019); Office of Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan, "Budget for One Minnesota: Community Prosperity," available at https://mn.gov/governor/assets/Community%20Prosperity_Budget%20Fact%20Sheet_tcm1055-376738.pdf (last accessed May 2019); New York State Office of the Governor, "2019 Women's Justice Agenda" (New York: 2019), available at https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/WomensReport021919.pdf#_blank; Linda Borg, "Raimondo's budget plan would extend free tuition to Rhode Island College," Providence Journal, January 17, 2019, available at <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190117/raimondos-budget-plan-would-extend-free-tuition-to-rhode-island-college/>; Louisiana Office of the Governor, "Gov. Edwards Highlights New Funding for Early Childhood Education in Proposed Budget," Press release, April 29, 2019, available at <http://gov.louisiana.gov/news/gov-edwards-highlights-new-funding-for-early-childhood-education-in-proposed-budget/>; North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, "Select Birth-to-Eight Provisions in FY 2019-21 Governor's Biennium Budget Proposal" (Raleigh, NC: 2019), available at https://files.buildthefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Governor-Budget_2019_21.pdf.

Of the proposed spending, preschool programs received the bulk of funding increases.¹⁰ While preschool is a worthy investment, states must also consider the needs of younger children. Infant and toddler child care is more expensive, harder to find, and often needed by parents who are stretched thin on time and money.¹¹ Furthermore, home visiting programs have a demonstrated track record of improving infant and maternal health outcomes but are only available to a small fraction of families.¹² While Ohio, Washington, and California made significant investments in these programs, few other states added any level of funding for home visiting. Moreover, in this budget cycle, Oregon and Vermont are among the only states that targeted new state funding specifically to infant and toddler child care.¹³

Highlighted states

While many states increased investment, the five with the highest level of investment per child are highlighted below.

- **California:** California had the highest total increase in funding for early learning programs. Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) called for large spending increases to expand subsidized child care facilities and support the child care workforce; improve and expand campus child care options; provide statewide full-day kindergarten; and expand home visiting programs with a specific funding stream aimed at improving infant and maternal health for African Americans.¹⁴

- **Colorado:** Gov. Jared Polis (D) has made universal full-day kindergarten one of his top priorities in an effort to improve educational outcomes, reduce the child care burden for families, and free up funding that local school districts can use to invest in preschool and child care.¹⁵
- **District of Columbia:** Mayor Bowser’s budget proposed a greater per-child increase in funding than that of any state. Washington’s early learning investments are especially impressive since the district already offers universal full-day pre-K. The district plans to convert old school buildings into new child care centers, expand early action pre-K initiatives, improve provider rates, and expand the refundability of its child care affordability tax credit.¹⁶
- **New Mexico:** In 2019, New Mexico established a department for early childhood education and care with nearly unanimous approval, demonstrating the state’s commitment to improving child well-being.¹⁷ Furthermore, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) proposed \$60 million to move the state toward universal pre-K, as well as increases in home visiting and early screening services.¹⁸
- **Oregon:** Gov. Kate Brown (D) proposed more than \$220 million for early childhood over the biennium. Her early childhood investments include the establishment of the Baby Promise program—which is aimed at increasing supply for infant and toddler child care—and a fund dedicated to improving equity within early childhood programs.¹⁹

Conclusion

Budget requests are important signals of a governor’s priorities. This analysis shows that many governors are following through on their campaign promises and prioritizing investments in early learning programs. While these budget proposals must still go through approval and negotiation processes with state legislatures, they are a positive first step and demonstrate a clear commitment from the executive, which is crucial to reaching an endpoint that will benefit children and families.

Federal commitment can also promote access to affordable, high-quality child care.²⁰ For example, recent funding increases for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) have enabled states to improve and expand their child care systems.²¹ However, until a comprehensive solution such as the Child Care for Working Families Act is implemented, states will still need to step up and prioritize early learning programs in their budgets.²² Thankfully, these recent budget proposals show that many governors are doing just that and championing the need for increased investments to support children, their families, and the economy.

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Appendix: Methodology

Table 1 data are based on the author's analysis of governors' most recent budget proposals. This analysis only includes increased investment that comes from state funding. Increases from CCDBG or other federal funding sources are not included; neither are proposed increases in city or county budgets. In addition, the total only includes funding allocated for state child care, preschool, full-day kindergarten, and home visiting programs—or sources directly allocated to help parents afford these services, such as a child care tax credit. Money allocated to programs in which some level of funding could go toward child care or home visiting services but these services are not the focus of the program—and the amount allocated for such services is not defined—is not counted. This includes broad increases to pre-K-12 systems if none of the money is explicitly appropriated to pre-K, as enrollment in public pre-K is significantly lower than that of other grades in most states.

In addition, this count does not include inflation adjustments or other marginal changes. As a result, it undercounts the total of new resources allocated for child care. Many governors' budgets are produced on a biennial basis, with funding proposed for the next two years. If funding is allocated across two years, the number is divided by two to calculate the yearly increase.

Endnotes

- 1 Katie Hamm, Cristina Novoa, and Steven Jessen-Howard, "Newly Elected Governors Support Expanding Early Childhood Programs," Center for American Progress, November 7, 2018, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2018/11/07/460604/newly-elected-governors-support-expanding-early-childhood-programs/>.
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- 6 Hirokazu Yoshikawa and others, "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education" (Washington: Society for Research in Child Development and New York: Foundation for Child Development, 2013), available at http://srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf.
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- 10 Some new investments that benefit young children and their parents are not reflected in this analysis. Many states looked beyond child care, making investments to improve children's well-being in other ways. For example, the governors of Kansas, Maine, North Carolina, and Wisconsin have proposed expanding Medicaid, which would provide health insurance and improved financial stability for thousands of children. Meanwhile, California is among the states leading the way on child poverty reduction and paid family leave proposals; Ohio is investing in its child welfare systems to help children remain with their families and adequately provide for those who have been neglected or abused; and Michigan is one of several states making overdue investments to prevent children from being exposed to lead. Early care and education programs provide significant benefits, but other comprehensive supports such as these are also necessary to promote child and family well-being.
- 11 Steven Jessen-Howard and others, "Understanding Infant and Toddler Child Care Deserts" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2018), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=460128>; Simon Workman and Steven Jessen-Howard, "Understanding the True Cost of Child Care for Infants and Toddlers" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2018), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/11/15/460970/understanding-true-cost-child-care-infants-toddlers/>.
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- 13 State of Oregon, "2019-2021 Turning Point: An Agenda for Oregon's Future" (Salem, OR: 2018), available at https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policy/Documents/019-21_turning-point.pdf; Office of Gov. Phil Scott, "Statement: Shared Commitment to Increasing Access to Quality Child Care," Press release, February 1, 2019, available at <https://governor.vermont.gov/press-release/statement-shared-commitment-increasing-access-quality-child-care>.
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- 19 "Baby Promise" began with a pilot program using federal funding, but Gov. Brown's requested budget included an additional \$10 million in state general funds for the program, which is counted in this analysis. See State of Oregon, "2019-2021 Turning Point: An Agenda for Oregon's Future."
- 20 Simon Workman and Steven Jessen-Howard, "Early Learning in the United States: 2018," Center for American Progress, September 13, 2018, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/09/13/457747/early-learning-united-states-2018/>.
- 21 National Women's Law Center, "States Use New Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds to Help Children and Families" (Washington: 2019), available at <https://nwlrc.org/resources/states-use-new-child-care-development-block-grant-funds-help-children-families/>.
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