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Governor Lujan Grisham launches new stipend program supporting more than 800 early childhood professionals seeking advanced degrees

ECECD Spotlights Early Childhood Educators for Teacher Appreciation Month

SANTA FE – As part of Teacher Appreciation Month, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) celebrated with visits by agency leadership to early childhood centers in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Pecos, and Pojoaque Pueblo, delivering treats and supplies and meeting with teachers, administrators, and other staff. While these early childhood professionals play a critical role in the development and wellbeing of our state's youngest population, they are among the lowest paid workers in the economy and early childhood education systems are experiencing teacher shortages nationwide. The Lujan Grisham administration has made significant investments to reverse this trend and boost the early childhood workforce across New Mexico, including the recent launch of the Early Childhood Educator Student Success Grant on May 6.

"As we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Month, it's important to give special recognition to early childhood educators, who for too long have not received the professional respect and support they deserve," said ECECD Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky. "Early childhood educators are critical to the growth, development, and wellbeing of New Mexico children during their most important formational years. This administration is making historic investments to support the early childhood workforce in New Mexico by improving compensation, increasing diversity, and removing barriers to obtaining professional credentials and degrees."

To help provide financial support for early childhood professionals seeking advanced degrees in the field, the Early Childhood Educator Student Success Grant offers a stipend of up to \$2,000 per semester/trimester for the 2022-23 academic year. To be eligible, students must be enrolled in at least six credit hours and working toward an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education at an accredited institution of higher learning in New Mexico. ECECD estimates that more than 800 early childhood professionals are currently eligible to receive a stipend through the new grant.

Students may use the grant funding for expenses outside of the scope of tuition and fees, such as on gas, child care, rent, supplies, internet, food, and any other expense that supports the student's classroom attendance. New Mexico higher education institutions will administer and distribute the stipend program.

In accordance with the objectives and goals laid out in its New Mexico Early Childhood Strategic Plan (2021-2024), this grant opportunity will help ensure that New Mexico's early childhood workforce is supported to meet the needs of all families and young children through an aligned professional development system and through compensation that reflects the level of experience and training. The Early Childhood Educator Student Success Grant has a projected cost of about \$2.4 million, funded through the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation (CRSSA) Act.

Since ECECD's inception, the agency has made significant investments to ensure that the state's early childhood workforce is supported to meet the needs of New Mexico families and young children. Through ECECD, the Lujan Grisham administration has:

- Doubled enrollment in the ECECD scholarship program, which provides free tuition for early childhood professionals seeking an advanced degree from one of New Mexico's institutions of higher education;
- Tripled the number of educators enrolled in the ECECD wage supplement program, which is open to any early childhood educator who earns less than \$16/hr and has at least five credit hours of early childhood education coursework completed;
- Created a special \$1,500 bonus for early childhood educators who are certified bilingual in recognition of the importance of supporting linguistically appropriate education in our culturally diverse state, especially among New Mexico's 23 Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations;
- Launched the PreK Parity program to better align community-based PreK teacher salaries with school-based PreK teachers who have similar education and experience, increasing qualifying teachers' annual income between 10 and 20 thousand dollars;
- Increased child care subsidy rates, calibrated to build in higher wages for center-based workers and a base salary for home-based providers;
- Issued one-time incentive checks of \$1,500 to 7,665 child care professionals across the state, totaling nearly 11.5 million dollars.

More information about these teacher programs can be found at www.ececdscholarship.org.

Photos from ECECD Teachers Appreciation visits available for use at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w6Clf6h6kJpSwk5K7z-MY1RYFfGYGHlx/view?usp=sharing>

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Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham launched the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) in 2020, making New Mexico among the first states to consolidate all early childhood programs and services under a single cabinet-level agency. Under this administration, ECECD has led the nation by expanding access to free New Mexico PreK, overseeing the largest investment in early childhood infrastructure in state history, and implementing cost-free child care for a majority of New Mexico families. Learn more about how ECECD supports children, families, and the early childhood professionals that serve our communities at nmececd.org. On Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as [@NewMexicoECECD](https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoECECD).