



# SB23-269: Universal Preschool Provider Participation Bonuses

Sponsored by Senators Buckner and Rich, Representatives Lukens and Bradfield

SB23-269 establishes one-time bonuses for eligible providers who participate in Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado with the goal of increasing provider participation to ensure that all children have access to a universal preschool classroom in their communities. The Joint Budget Committee has set-aside \$2.5 million in one-time funding for the bonuses.

## Background

Launching in fall 2023, Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado will offer voluntary, high-quality universal preschool to every Colorado child in the year before kindergarten. The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is charged with recruiting preschool providers throughout the state to enable parents to choose from a mixed delivery system of preschool settings, including licensed community-based programs, school-based programs, and family child care homes.

High-quality preschool has demonstrated positive outcomes for children and families in the short- and long-term. Children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to experience higher levels of educational attainment and less likely to experience poverty or enter the criminal justice system.

## Bill Summary

SB23-269 creates the Colorado Universal Preschool Program Provider Participation Bonus Program. Bonuses will be distributed on a tiered structure:

1. All UPK providers who have registered by August 31, 2023 and have not previously participated in a state-run preschool program will receive a base bonus, estimated at \$700-\$1,000.
2. Additionally, all UPK providers who maintain or expand their licensed capacity to serve infants and toddlers between April 1, 2022 to April 1, 2024 will receive an additional bonus.
3. CDEC will distribute a final tier of targeted bonuses to providers in low-capacity preschool areas where UPK capacity is insufficient to meet demand from families.

The bonuses will help to offset some of the costs of new program implementation, particularly for providers who have not previously participated in state-run preschool. Providers can use bonus payments for a variety of purposes, including:

- Resources and materials to expand quality in the program;
- Coaching, professional development, or training;
- Bonuses for staff; and
- Other services to support quality practices.

The program is designed to provide one-time financial incentives to encourage preschool providers to participate in the UPK program. Over 30,000 families have already applied for UPK for the 2023-24 school year, and applications will continue to be accepted throughout the year.

This bill will help ensure there are enough providers throughout the state so that all families can choose the right setting for their child in their community. The bill strengthens the mixed delivery system by providing specific support to child care providers in licensed community-based and home-based programs who are participating in state-run preschool for the first time.

The bill also recognizes Universal Preschool is part of a birth to age five early learning and care system, and aims to preserve infant and toddler child care capacity in the state as Universal Preschool is implemented by offering a bonus for UPK providers who expand or maintain their infant and toddler slots.

SB23-269 emphasizes the importance of ensuring access to universal preschool classrooms in all communities throughout the state by directing additional bonuses to low-capacity preschool areas where there is insufficient UPK provider capacity to meet the demand of parents who wish to enroll their children.