



Date: October 27, 2021
To: House Committee on Education
From: Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures
Re: American Families Plan Overview of Universal Prekindergarten Education (UPK)

ADDENDUM

On October 26, 2021 Building Bright Future's Policy and Programs team met with several staff members from Senator Sanders, Senator Leahy, and Congressman Welch's offices to discuss the current status of the reconciliation bill, the child care and universal pre-K components of the legislation, and how Vermont can best position itself in preparation of potential federal investment. Based on that conversation, it is clear that while the bill is still very much in flux, there is strong federal support for these components, particularly the universal pre-K program.

The delegation's staff shared that the Congressional Budget Office is still running analysis that will help inform conversations and debate surrounding the full scope of the bill, the number of years the program will provide funding for, and the level of state match that will be required. Additionally, members of Vermont's delegation along with their colleagues across the country are still paying careful attention to how the universal pre-K program interacts with programs such as Head Start, and the child care program, wanting to ensure that transitions and high-quality programs are as seamless, accessible, and equitable as possible. Our team at Building Bright Futures remains in close conversation with Vermont's federal delegation and their teams in order to monitor the reconciliation bill, and provide any necessary data or information to best support the development of this federal policy for Vermont.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The universal pre-K section of the federal American Families Plan proposal contains many opportunities for states to continue their efforts towards strengthening early childhood systems, making high-quality pre-K education available to all families, and ensuring the early education sector pays a livable wage. Vermont is well positioned to examine the legislation, collaborate with stakeholders in the state and in our federal delegation, and ask critical questions, in order to capitalize on this potential opportunity.

A few main components of the universal pre-K section include:

- A focus on continued principles of quality: requires continued use of mixed-delivery pre-K programs
- A focus on continued principles of access: requires continued universal access for three and four-year olds, with a emphasis on the needs of underserved children and families
- A focus on the early education workforce: encourages the development of a highly qualified and well supported pre-K workforce

OVERVIEW

The Biden Administration is moving forward a vision for **Universal Prekindergarten Education (UPK) for three and four-year-olds** nationwide through the American Families Plan. A \$200 billion investment in UPK is part of a \$450 billion investment in early childhood more broadly. States will have to agree to participate in the program and document their ability to meet requirements through state legislation. UPK funding will be routed through the state's designated UPK lead. The \$200 billion investment would last for 10 years and would then need to be reauthorized by Congress.

Draft Bill

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/ED/ED00/20210909/114029/BILLS-117-CommitteePrint2-S000185-Amdt-1.pdf>



- UPK starts on page 234

The UPK program Overview

- Free UPK for all three and four-year-olds prioritizing the needs of underserved children (pg 249) including children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care or kinship care, children in families who are engaged in migrant or seasonal agricultural labor, children with disabilities, and dual language learners
- A goal of families saving, on average, \$13k/year;
- Requires UPK delivery is universal, high-quality, free, and inclusive (high quality benchmarks such as low educator/child ratios, developmentally appropriate curriculum, educator credentials, and supporting increased wages for educators and staff);
- A requirement to build or improve upon a state's mixed delivery model (ie: Family child care, Head Start, Schools, Child Care Centers) for providing UPK based on parent choice and needs;
- A requirement for states to give voice to families;
- A State-Federal partnership for cost sharing (a state match will be required);
- Strong focus on partnership with Head Start;
- Focus on improving transitions of children from early childhood education to elementary school;
- Emphasis on collaboration with entities carrying out programs under Part C of IDEA (In Vermont, CDD, CIS);
- Partnership with higher education institutions to facilitate degree attainment.

Funding Overview: *Starting on page 238*

- Payment for federal activities including the administration, monitoring, technical assistance, and research
 - FY 2022 - \$165,000,000
 - FY 2023 - \$200,000,000
 - FY 2025 - 2028, not more than 2%
- FY 2022-2027 - \$2,500,000,000 for each fiscal year to improve compensation of Head Start staff
- FY 2023-2028 - \$1,250,000,000 annually to carry out program of grants to localities
- Payments to States for Preschool Services (pg 240): Each State with an approved plan for preschool services will receive an amount for each year equal to:
 - 100% of the State's expenditures in the year for preschool services for each of FY 2022, 2023, and 2024
 - 90% of the State's expenditures in the year for preschool services for each of FY 2025
 - 80% of the State's expenditures in the year for preschool services for each of FY 2026
 - 70% of the State's expenditures in the year for preschool services for each of FY 2027
 - 60% of the State's expenditures in the year for preschool services for each of FY 2028
- Payment for State Activities (overview below): Each state with an approved plan will be paid an amount for a fiscal year equal to 50% of the amount of the State's expenditures for the activities described below, except that in no case shall a payment for a fiscal year exceed the amount equal to 10% of the State's expenditures described in subparagraph A for such fiscal year.
- Non-Federal share (pg. 241): The state is responsible for expenditures not provided above in each year.
- Allowable sources of Non-Federal Share (pg 258)
 - Cash, in kind, fairly evaluated, including facilities or property, equipment or services
 - An increase in amounts spent by the State to expand **half-day** kindergarten programs into **full-day** programs
 - Does not include contributions being used as non-Federal share or match for another Federal award
 - Could be provided from State, local, philanthropic, private or combination of sources



- Shall count **no more than 50% of the State's current spending on prekindergarten programs** toward state match
- Advance payment possible based on advance estimates of expenditures
- Information on funding requirements to Tribes and territories and other special populations on page 238

State Activities Overview (Pg. 242)

- Administration
- Continuous quality improvement: use of data, research, monitoring, training, technical assistance, professional development, and coaching to support providers
- Outreach and enrollment support for families and specific outreach for underserved populations
- Supporting data systems building
- Supporting staff of eligible providers
- Supporting activities that ensure access to inclusive UPK for children with disabilities
- Providing appropriate transportation
- Conducting or updating the State's statewide needs assessment

What does Universal PreK mean?

- Universal = universally available to all children in the State without any additional eligibility requirements
 - High-quality, free, inclusive, and mixed delivery UPK in high-need communities
- By no later than 1 year after receiving federal funding, meet State's preschool education standards outlined in state plan
- Offer programming that meets duration requirements of at least 1,020 annual hours, in the program performance standards applicable to Head Start
- Adopt outreach for children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care or kinship care, children in families who are engaged in migrant or seasonal agricultural labor, children with disabilities under Part C of IDEA, dual language learners

Development of a State Plan (Pg 243-252): Focused on universal, high-quality, free, inclusive, and mixed delivery preschool services

- Certification of developmentally appropriate, evidence-based preschool standards
- Certification of prioritizing expansion of universal, high-quality, free, inclusive, and mixed delivery UPK in high-need communities
 - Description of high-need communities
 - How State determined they were high-need (methodology)
 - Rate of poverty
 - Rate of access to high-quality UPK within the community
 - Other indicators of community need
 - Assurance State will distribute funding for UPK to high-needs communities
- Description of how funding will ensure that existing publicly funded programs meet the new requirements
- Certification that State will support a mixed delivery UPK system, including a certification that the State will facilitate participation in the system of Head Start programs and programs offered by other eligible providers
- Assurance that funding will ensure children with disabilities have access to inclusive UPK under IDEA
- Certification to support continuous QI
- Certification of ensuring a high quality early childhood workforce



- Description of how State will coordinate services and funding with services for other Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood development programs
 - *Note: In state statute, BBF is named to support coordination of early childhood funding and budget priorities informed by the Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP). In FY22, BBF is utilizing HRSA funding to develop an early childhood budget to have a baseline of resources and funding allocated toward early childhood programs. BBF is also coordinating a funding matrix for ARPA and Build Back Better initiatives across the early childhood system (VDH, CDD, DMH, AOE) to support this effort.*

I will be reconvening with the National Early Childhood Solutions Consortium to discuss early childhood initiatives on Thursday, September 23rd, during which, I will document questions and comments of other states around the Biden Administration's proposal. I will also compile feedback from Vermont Agency leaders, the State Advisory Council and other early childhood education partners as soon as possible to inform our congressional delegates. Please be considering the following:

- What questions do you have for our Federal partners about this policy?

Programmatic questions

- Is there a requirement around # hours of UPK per week?
 - One section references 1,020 hrs related to Head Start (pg 249)
 - One section references the transition from half-day to full-day programs (pg 259)

Logistical questions

- What does the formal application process look like, what would reporting entail, and how often would we need to apply/report/demonstrate outcomes over 10 years?
 - Does a state need to "opt in" in year 1 in order to receive all funding or is it possible to apply for funding in year 2?
 - What would funding provisions look like for a state with 2 lead agencies?
 - Can funding be used to hire more staff to support programmatic components?
- Will match requirements and rates determine our state's participation?
 - If so, is there a specific rate that would be particularly concerning?
 - What information do our Federal partners need to know about the existing UPK program in Vermont?
 - Provide documentation on Vermont's overall commitment to early childhood and a focus on children and families to solidify Congress' understanding of this critical investment.

I look forward to your partnership and am excited for this opportunity to build on Vermont's existing commitment to early childhood education!

Sincerely,

Morgan K. Crossman, Ph.D., M.A.
Executive Director, Building Bright Futures
(802) 881-1264 | mcrossman@buildingbrightfutures.org