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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Early Childhood Education and Care Department Launches Incentive Pay Program to Support Child Care Professionals During the Public Health Emergency

Also Announces Grant Program with Economic Development Department to Stabilize Early Childhood Sector

Santa Fe - Today, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) announced that it will use a portion of its federal CARES Act stimulus funding to offer incentive pay to early childhood professionals who are working in centers that remain open during the public health emergency.

“Throughout this crisis, New Mexico’s early childhood educators have stepped up in extraordinary ways, and this incentive pay plan is one way of thanking them,” said ECECD Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky.

Full-time early childhood workers will be eligible for \$700 per month in pay for each month worked from April - June. Part-time early childhood workers will be eligible for \$350 per month for each month worked during the same period. Applications for staff, directors and administrators at registered and licensed facilities will be available next week.

The incentive pay program is part of a larger statewide effort to coordinate economic recovery efforts. Funds will be administered by ECECD through a partnership with the Region 9 Education Cooperative.

Note: Incentive pay will not affect Medicaid eligibility for current recipients during the public health emergency - but it could affect *new* Medicaid applicants. For questions about SNAP eligibility, early childhood professionals are encouraged to check with their Human Services Department (HSD) Eligibility Specialist.

Child Care Stabilization and Recovery Grant Program

ECECD also announced that it will make nearly \$12 million in grants to assist licensed child care providers who have been impacted by the health emergency. ECECD is partnering with the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) to administer these grants in collaboration with CARES Act funding for small businesses. Doing so will help providers access multiple funding opportunities in a streamlined

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“The public health crisis has dealt a blow to New Mexico businesses - and that’s why the Economic Development Department is excited to partner with Early Childhood to help child care centers across the state get back on track,” said EDD Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes.

The CARES Act provides \$3.5 billion to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in grants to states for immediate assistance to child care providers; New Mexico received approximately \$29.4 million. These grants serve two purposes: to prevent providers from going out of business, and to support child care for families, including for healthcare workers, first responders, and others playing critical roles during this crisis.

Tiered grant awards will provide immediate relief and support to eligible child care providers across New Mexico. The grants will cover lost income resulting from closure, response and recovery operation costs (including enhanced cleaning and sanitation), and other expenses. Grants will range from \$2,000 to \$34,500 and will depend on setting (e.g, licensed home or center), size, quality level, and percentage of children on child care subsidy. ECECD will also continue to prioritize programs that serve infants and toddlers - and to focus on quality improvement across the board. Registered homes are not eligible for these grants, but they can apply for incentive pay.

In partnership with EDD, ECECD will host a webinar to discuss this funding opportunity on Tuesday, May 12 at 8:00 a.m. A registration link will be available in the coming days.

The incentive pay program and the child care stabilization and recovery grants programs are just two of the ways that ECECD has sought to support early childhood educators, providers, families, and children throughout the crisis. Throughout the public health emergency, the department will use more than \$14 million in CARES Act funding to provide free child care assistance contracts to first responders, health care workers, and other essential personnel - and to offer differentials to providers who have stayed open to serve other essential workers. ECECD has also waived child care copays for parents across the state.

In addition, ECECD continues to partner with DOH to offer up-to-date health and safety guidance to early childhood providers - as well as to distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to every corner of the state.

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