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United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)  
“Solving the Child Care Crisis: Meeting the Needs of Working Families and Child Care  
Providers”

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Testimony of

Elizabeth Groginsky  
Cabinet Secretary

New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department

Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Cassidy and Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today about New Mexico’s success toward building a comprehensive, high-quality, equitable, and affordable early childhood system that supports families’ needs by delivering high-quality early education and care for young children during their years of most critical and rapid development. In New Mexico, this system translates into state policies that expand, fund, and continuously improve child care, preschool, Head Start, home visiting, and early intervention, in a coordinated approach, to support positive outcomes for families and young children.

As an aunt of 18 beautiful nieces and nephews, a great aunt of 19, and in my role as Cabinet Secretary, I know firsthand the struggles and joys of working families and child care providers.

In my testimony today I will discuss how New Mexico’s approach has transformed child care policies to support families today, improved children’s short- and long-term outcomes, and increased and strengthened the child care workforce that cares for and educates them, which helps us respect and ensure parent choice. These actions taken together ultimately fuels the overall economy of our state today and into the future.

After providing a brief New Mexico context, I will describe our widespread and significant child care reforms and their impacts: expanding access by significantly increasing families’ eligibility; improving affordability by eliminating parent copayments; paying for the actual cost of quality care; making large fiscal investments; elevating state governance; and realizing the immense benefits of federal relief funding.

New Mexico’s child care transformation began in July 2021 when the state **increased child care assistance rates to reflect the true cost of care** using a federally-approved cost estimation methodology and then equally important, we **expanded eligibility for families to 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and waived copayments for families**. These important policy changes, made by the Governor, helped **stabilize and improve the quality and supply of child care** throughout the state. Other New Mexico workforce improvement policies include **better**

**compensation of early childhood professionals and supporting best practices for child care businesses.**

In making effective changes to the state's early childhood system, it is essential to appreciate New Mexico's unique historical context, diverse cultural and linguistic heritage, with close knit communities and families with traditions going back many hundreds of years. Our state is shaped by 23 sovereign Native American Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations – each with their own unique languages, histories, and traditions and comprise 11 percent of the total state population along with a 49 percent Hispanic population, a great diversity which contributes to the depth and beauty of our state.

Despite these strengths, New Mexico has struggled for generations to realize its potential. The reasons for this are complex, and many are rooted in historical inequities, but under the leadership of our Governor, Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico has pursued a bold, transformational vision for a state where all New Mexico families thrive.

First, I want to focus on our advances in **financing** and in **governance**. For the last decade, New Mexico advocates have supported greater investment in the state early childhood system, recognizing that providing comprehensive family supports and a strong foundation for children's learning and growth are essential for improving outcomes for young children in our state. Governor Lujan Grisham made early childhood education and care a cornerstone of her policy agenda, and in 2019 New Mexico created one of the first cabinet-level early education and care departments in the nation. Aligning all of New Mexico's early childhood programs and services under one agency has been critical for all the state policy improvements and was instrumental in helping us successfully navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

In the Governor's second year, she proposed an Early Childhood Trust Fund using excess state revenues to increase funding for early childhood programs, which was enacted with bipartisan support from the New Mexico Legislature. And now this past year, the voters approved a constitutional amendment for dedicated funding for early childhood education. I'll come back to this key issue of revenue as I close out my testimony.

Like every other state, New Mexico's child care industry found itself on the brink of total collapse during the early weeks and months of the pandemic. Child care providers' revenues plummeted along with lower enrollment, which exacerbated existing challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified child care professionals. Added health and safety costs ate away at already razor thin margins. COVID exposed how fragile and fractured the child care model in America already was.

Fortunately, the federal government recognized how crucial child care is to families, young children, and local economies, and made historic investments in the industry through the distribution of more than \$400 million in federal relief funding to New Mexico. Amidst this crisis, New Mexico identified an opportunity – with the resources available through these federal funds – to stabilize and remake the entire foundation of the state's child care industry. We did this by improving the sustainability of the business model, increasing compensation for the child care workforce, expanding access and affordability for families, and enhancing the quality of education and care for children.

A critical component for the success of this funding was the flexibility the federal government provided to states. The fundamental nature of the COVID-19 emergency demanded that federal relief funds be distributed with all possible haste to avoid collapse of the already fragile child care industry under the extraordinary strains caused by the pandemic. These federal funds included CARES (Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security) Act, CRRSA (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations) Act, and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act). With this funding, states were empowered to respond to the unique needs of their early childhood systems and the families, children, and communities that they served. Because of this flexibility, New Mexico was able to be nimble, decisive, and creative with how it maximized these funds, while preserving the mixed delivery system that gives families the choices they need. With this support, the state embarked on a series of groundbreaking policy changes, which I discuss below.

**Stabilize the child care industry to ensure access to quality early care and education**

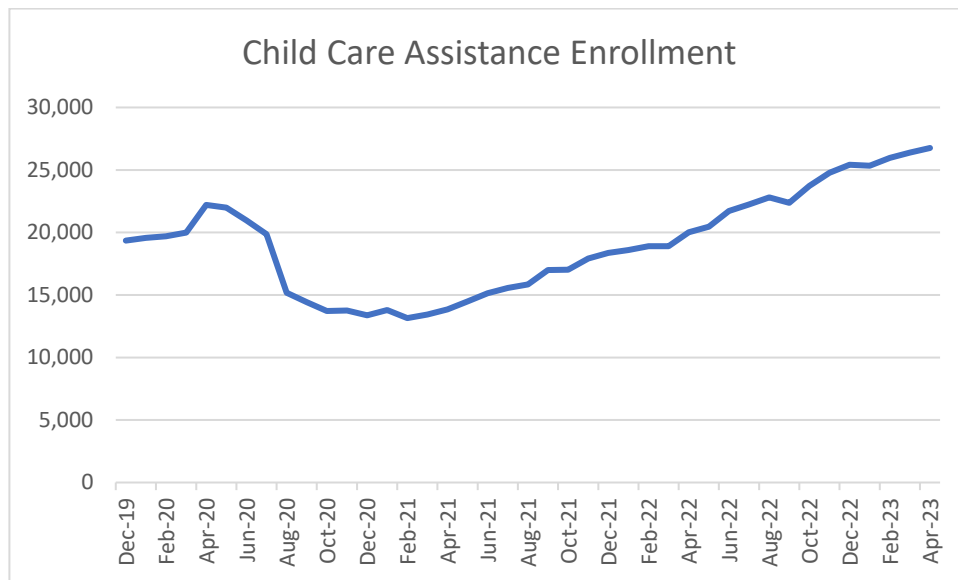
New Mexico’s low point in child care capacity came in February 2021, when 15 percent of pre-pandemic child care capacity had been eliminated. The state, however, acted swiftly, distributing over \$163 million in grants later that year to more than 1,100 child care providers, allowing many programs to reopen or stay open, provide raises and bonuses to staff, and make improvements to their infrastructure and learning environments. Providers reported that these stabilization grants not only kept their businesses afloat but allowed them to emerge from the pandemic even stronger than before. New Mexico has in fact more licensed child care capacity than before the pandemic and has nearly as many facilities (Table 1).

**Table 1. Licensed Child Care Capacity in New Mexico Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic**

	<b>March 2020</b>	<b>March 2021</b>	<b>March 2022</b>	<b>March 2023</b>	<b>Difference 2020-2023</b>
<b>Total Licensed Capacity</b>	61,601	53,301	59,565	63,233	+1,632
<b>Total Licensed Facilities</b>	994	847	937	983	-11

After an initial spike in child care assistance enrollment when schools were closing in March 2020, enrollment began to drop. When federal pandemic relief funding arrived in March 2021, enrollment improved and child care programs were able to support more children in care. Enrollment is now increasing rapidly, by more than 300 families per month. Currently, 42 percent of New Mexico’s licensed capacity is supported by the state’s child care assistance program.

**Chart 1. Number of Children Enrolled in New Mexico Child Care Assistance Dec. 2019 to April 2023**



While our providers are not with me today, they have shared with me with their experiences about the impact of this support:

In 2022, ECECD leveraged its federal relief funding along with Grant County federal relief funding to support a local provider in Silver City, NM in preserving critical child care capacity for the community<sup>1</sup>. El Grito del Bosque Early Learning Center now provides care for up to 56 children from six weeks to three years of age. The center was set to permanently close, depriving Silver City of one of the only child development centers that served infants and toddlers and stranding dozens of families without child care.

**Misty Pugmire El Grito Director, Silver City, NM:** “Keeping this child care center open means so much to the families of Silver City. This is what is possible when the whole community comes together to support early education and care. Rather than losing this resource, we have created a beautiful space where babies and young children in Grant County can learn and grow for generations.”

**Connie Coates, office manager and treasurer at Canyon Christian Academy in Alamogordo, NM:** “The stabilization grant has been a great blessing. The funding we received made it possible for us to hire a full-time classroom aide to help in our preschool, allowing for more individualized attention to better focus on each students’ needs.”

**Jennifer Salinas, director of the Early Learning Center at Kaune in Santa Fe, NM:** “We’ve been able to hire a third teacher for each of our classrooms, which, because of the pandemic, the children have really needed that one-on-one attention. We’ve also hired a

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2022/04/08/eccd-grant-helps-expand-child-care-capacity-in-silver-city/>

part-time mental health consultant and later we hope to hire a full-time mental health consultant. We also plan to use the funding for maintenance on our building, including upgrades to our heating and plumbing systems, and the installation of outdoor learning spaces.”

**Fatima Gonzalez Ray, director of Little Amigos Child Development Center in Las Cruces:** “It’s made a huge difference on our stress levels. The funding has helped us offset any unforeseen expenses and made it possible for us to make payroll, hire new teachers, and purchase much-needed supplies and materials for our classrooms. We’ve also been able to purchase for each classroom a new HEPA-filtered air purifier, which so far has led to a reduction in sick days taken by our staff.”

### **Improve the long-term viability of the child care industry and support parent choice through child care assistance rates that reflect the true cost of care<sup>2</sup>**

Instead of setting rates based on a market rate study, which perpetuates inadequate payment rates, New Mexico became the first state in the nation, along with D.C., to use an alternative methodology approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care. In 2021, and again in 2023<sup>3</sup>, New Mexico created a cost estimation model to inform and determine child care subsidy rates. This alternative model is based on what it costs providers to create quality learning environments, maintain child-to-teacher ratios, and pay their staff competitive wages. This change in how we pay child care providers is central to a stable and expanding workforce because we now pay for actual costs of care instead of relying on the outdated market rate pricing approach that has reinforced a broken child care market. Most states use this traditional market rate study model that we replaced, which surveys providers to determine what they are charging parents for care and set rates accordingly. This method is flawed because child care tuition remains artificially low due to families’ inability to afford the full cost of quality care. Tuition stays low to keep families from being priced out; child care provider revenues remain low; and wages for child care professionals remain low.

As a result of the new approach we are using, child care providers are now able to improve the compensation of their employees, have a healthier business bottom line, and provide a path to allowing the state to serve more children in child care. Here’s what our providers say about it:

**Future Generations Early Learning Center in Clovis, NM:** Ashleigh Tackitt, Center Director said: “The increased revenues will help our center better serve children and families, our employees, and our community. With this additional support, we can invest in improved learning environments, hire more staff to lower student-teacher ratios, and provide more individualized care and education for the children we serve. Increased wages for our staff have given them the security they needed to quit second jobs, spend more quality time with their own families, pursue early education degrees and credentials, and

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2021/07/01/n-m-dramatically-expands-child-care-assistance/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2023/05/08/eccd-announces-proposed-changes-that-will-improve-access-to-high-quality-child-care-for-most-new-mexico-families/>

commit to early education as a viable long-term career.”

**The Toy Box Early Learning and Child Care Center, Las Cruces, NM,** Angela Garcia, CEO: “New Mexico’s continued investment in early childhood education is changing the trajectory of our future. My program is finally fully staffed for the first time since the pandemic. My educators have said they can now breathe a little easier at home financially making them better teachers in the classroom. Our children continue to benefit from these investments by having less stressed teachers and more financially stable homes with waived copays and continuity of care with increased access. We believe it takes a village to provide the best foundation possible for our children and these continued investments allow everyone in the village to focus on what’s important, our children. The most recent proposed increases to the child care assistance rates are another step in ensuring quality child care and education for our children and ensuring we move towards a professional wage for our early childhood professionals.

**A Gold Star Academy & Child Development Center, Farmington, NM,** Barbara Tedrow, Owner/CEO: “The \$3 an hour raise for child care workers and the proposed increase to child care assistance rates have collectively transformed my child care center, our employees, and our community. They have elevated the value and recognition of our staff, expanded our reach to serve more families, and improved the economic and educational opportunities for our community.”

#### **Strengthen families through expanded eligibility and waived parent copayments<sup>4</sup>**

In 2022, ECECD used federal emergency funds to increase income eligibility for child care assistance (CCA) up to 400 percent of federal poverty level, which is currently \$120,000 per year for a family of four. Simultaneously, ECECD waived all family copayments, making child care free for a majority of New Mexico families. This has been a game changer for working families in New Mexico, who routinely spent a third or more of their gross income on child care. Relieved of this crippling financial burden, families can better afford rent or mortgage, food and clothing, transportation, health needs, put money aside for retirement, extracurricular activities for their children, and other activities that improve their family’s stability, security, and well-being. These changes have allowed New Mexico to provide financial assistance for more families who need child care, most of them at or near poverty. Here is what families have shared about what this means to them:

**Dylan Rojas, Albuquerque, NM:** a single father shared the following: “Because I am on my own with my one year old daughter, my biggest fear was that I was not going to be able to afford child care. The free child care provided through the State of New Mexico’s Child Care Assistance program has eliminated that stress and worry from my life. Because of this program, I know that while I work for a better future for our family, my daughter is in a safe place where she is happy, learning, and growing. Applying for Child Care Assistance was a simple and easy process and the support it provides has allowed me to stop living paycheck to paycheck, build up savings, and live a more comfortable and stable

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2022/04/28/new-mexico-leads-the-nation-as-governor-lujan-grisham-makes-childcare-free-for-most-families/>

life with my daughter.”

**Mackenzie Clark, of Portales, NM:** “The CCA program has made our lives *a lot* less stressful. The cost of child care can be equivalent to what we spend on rent, and the Child Care Assistance program means I don’t have to worry about that expense on top of everything else. I now have the money to get extra things my son needs like clothing, shoes, educational materials, and workbooks, as well as the fun stuff like toys and family outings. It’s been an amazing experience and I am so grateful that our local child care providers helped connect us with ECECD’s Child Care Assistance program.”

**Lauren Frazier, of Albuquerque, NM:** “I used to be the stay-at-home parent while my husband was our primary bread winner. It has been a long-term dream of mine to go to nursing school and become an RN. Until we enrolled in this program, there wasn’t a way for me to afford school because of the cost of child care and the time commitment nursing school requires. Because of the CCA program, I am now working towards my dream job. It’s helping my dream come true all while providing the best quality of care for my children.”

**Vicki Sampler, Curry County, NM** “The expanded child care assistance program allows me to work full time to provide for my children,” Said Vicki Sampler, a single mother of four in Curry County, NM. “I can go to work with peace of mind knowing that my children are safe and receiving quality care and education from trusted professionals. I would never have been able to afford that kind of care without the child care assistance program and waived copays. Now I have flexibility in my budget to afford little league for my kids and other family activities that I wouldn’t have had time or money for otherwise.”

**Irlanda Hernandez, Albuquerque, NM** “The co-pay waiver for my 4-year-old son’s child care has been a such great help financially for our family,” said Irlanda Hernandez, an educator and mother of four. As a dual-language second-grade teacher with a background in early childhood education, I know that a quality early education can have a tremendous impact on a child’s life, and this expansion of the child care copay waiver makes quality early education all the more accessible to families like mine.”

### **Expand child care supply and access**

Affordability is not the only major barrier to families’ accessing quality care in their communities, however. Like most states, New Mexico has a longstanding shortage of child care supply. There simply isn’t enough child care in most communities to meet the needs of the families who live there. To begin addressing this issue, ECECD allocated over \$11 million in ARPA stabilization administration funds to create a child care supply building grant. ECECD has awarded 37 grants to child care providers in communities where care is most needed. Originally the grant was projected to create 800 new slots; today we project that the grant will increase licensed capacity by 1,200; creating more opportunities for New Mexico families. Our providers described the impact:

**Crystal Tapia-Romero – New Mexico Early Learning Academy, Albuquerque, NM:** “We’re excited to have the supply building grant because it is going to allow us to complete minor renovation on a building that will serve infants and toddlers. We will use

the funds to furnish the building and pay the salaries of staff for the first six months. The infant/toddler program will create 150 new slots. The building is located in a child care desert where there aren't many high-quality programs for infants and toddlers. Overall, this is a huge blessing because not only are we now able to provide quality care for nearly 100 families in that area, but we are creating about 75 new jobs. We offer competitive wages for our employees and to create this many new jobs and new slots is extremely exciting for us.”

**Barbara Tedrow – A Gold Star Academy & Child Development Center, Farmington, NM:** “The Supply Building Grant has expanded our infant and toddler child care services and has opened up a world of possibilities for our centers and the families in our community. This invaluable opportunity has allowed us to create additional spaces, improve facilities, and enhance our programming to meet the unique needs of our youngest learners. We can now offer a nurturing, stimulating, and an inclusive environment where infants and toddlers can thrive, setting the foundation for a lifelong love of learning. The grant has also facilitated the recruitment and training of highly skilled staff, ensuring that we can deliver the highest quality and education to every child.

### **Advance a diverse, well-compensated, and credentialed early childhood workforce**

To prevent erosion of the early childhood workforce and incentivize new workers entering the profession, ECECD utilized federal relief funds to provide a \$1,500 recruitment and retention bonus<sup>5</sup> to every early educator who served during the pandemic, followed by a grant to providers that funded a \$3/hour raise<sup>6</sup> for over 7,000 child care staff across the state. Additionally, New Mexico invested heavily in credential and degree supports for early educators, incentives for Native American and bilingual educators,<sup>7</sup> free college tuition,<sup>8</sup> and stipends to cover living expenses<sup>9</sup> for those actively pursuing a degree in early childhood education and care.

**Michelle Valles, teacher Bumble Bee Learning Center, Santa Teresa, NM:** “There has been a drastic change on my part receiving the extra three dollars an hour. It has helped me with my rent and transportation expenses and helps me focus better on what we do: caring for the children and giving them the support that they need. It also helps me continue my studies and training to become a better teacher.”

**Rebecca Sanabria, teacher at NM Children First Learning Center, Sunland Park, NM:** “The wage increase has helped me out financially, especially as a first-time mom who struggles with the expenses of raising a baby. It gives me the courage to come to

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2021/11/01/child-care-workers-in-new-mexico-eligible-for-1500-incentive-payments/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2022/10/11/gov-lujan-grisham-announces-historic-pay-increase-for-early-childhood-workforce/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2022/11/10/ececd-awards-7-million-in-endowments-to-support-early-childhood-programs-at-nm-colleges-and-universities/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/2022/03/04/governor-signs-legislation-making-college-tuition-free/#:~:text=Michelle%20Lujan%20Grisham%20on%20Friday,program%20in%20the%20United%20States.>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nmeccd.org/2022/05/12/governor-lujan-grisham-launches-new-stipend-program-supporting-more-than-800-early-childhood-professionals-seeking-advanced-degrees/>



work, and the satisfaction of knowing that my bills are getting paid and I'm providing for my family. I'm not as stressed anymore.”

**Ruth Porta, Administrator at La Esperanza Child Development Center, LLC in Albuquerque, NM**

“The Competitive Pay for Professionals (CPP) \$3 an hour raise has allowed my program to retain and recruit qualified staff and educators. Before my base pay was \$13.00 per hour now thanks to the CPP my starting pay is \$16.00 per hour. My staff morale has increased significantly and the turnover has decreased by almost 80 percent. One of my educators, a single mother of three children, told me last week that now with the CPP she qualifies to buy a house! With the new proposed rulemaking for child care assistance rate increases, my program will be able to continue paying my staff at the same rate as the CPP and increase my revenues to a level that will allow me to hire a Family Liaison Coordinator and an Infant-Toddler Curriculum Director to increase the quality of service we provide to our community.”

**Where we are today: public investment and leadership makes a difference.** Taken together, the federal relief funds equipped our state to transform and reinvigorate our early childhood system. Today, New Mexico leads the nation in early childhood investment and innovation and serves as a roadmap for many other states looking to make similar changes. However, as transformational as these emergency funds were for New Mexico, they were one-time only funds and not sufficient to maintain these gains over the long term.

Following the end of most pandemic restrictions in Spring 2022, our department leadership embarked on an extensive tour<sup>10</sup> of the state to visit early childhood programs to observe the impact of the emergency relief funding and learn the needs of providers. One of the most common items of feedback we heard, from every corner of the state, was concern about the looming expiration of federal relief funds, which they worried would roll back recent gains and return the child care industry to an unsustainable pre-pandemic status-quo.

Fortunately, in the November 2022 election, the voters of New Mexico approved a significant, sustainable, and predictable new source of funding for early childhood by tapping into a small portion of the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the Early Childhood Trust Fund is growing, resulting in a significant increase in distributions to ECECD. With these new funds, New Mexico is able to increase rates for child care assistance and PreK, which will result directly in increased compensation for providers, and free child care for most New Mexico families. Not every state is in the same position as New Mexico, and increased federal funding for child care must be part of the equation moving forward.

New Mexico is proof positive of the enormous impact that a significant federal investment in early childhood programs and services can have on families, young children, and the communities in which they live. For too long, our nation has underinvested in young children during their most critical and rapid period of development. Ninety percent of brain development occurs in the first

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.nmececd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Spring-Tour-2022\\_Mini-Report\\_Dec-20-2022.pdf](https://www.nmececd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Spring-Tour-2022_Mini-Report_Dec-20-2022.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.abqjournal.com/2547588/voters-approve-amendment-to-spend-more-money-on-early-childhood-education.html>

five years of life, and research is definitive that access to high-quality care and education during this window improves long-term outcomes for children across a range of academic, health, and well-being indicators. An investment in early care and education is an investment in a more vibrant and secure future for our children and families.

Drawing from the lessons learned from the extraordinary early childhood investments the federal government made during the pandemic, I urge the members of this committee, Congress, and the federal administration to maintain these investments and commit to a long-term early childhood funding strategy for states that sustains the significant child care advancements we and others have made. Thank you for your time and this opportunity to share New Mexico's experiences and vision for the future of our children.

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH GROGINSKY, CABINET SECRETARY FOR  
THE NEW MEXICO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE DEPARTMENT  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS Hearing  
on

“Solving the Child Care Crisis: Meeting the Needs of Working Families and Child Care  
Providers”

Using the federal relief funds distributed through CARES (Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security) Act, CRRSA (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations) Act, and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act), New Mexico averted the collapse of its child care industry and developed and implemented transformational policies that have begun to fix many of the persistent problems that have blocked access to affordable, quality care.

**Stabilize the child care industry to ensure access to quality early care and education**

- Distributed over \$163 million in child care stabilization grants to more than 1,100 child care providers.
- Federal funds supported staff raises and bonuses and improvements to infrastructure and learning environments.
- This support resulted in providers staying open through the pandemic.

**Improve the long-term viability of the child care workforce and support parent choice through child care assistance rates that reflect the true cost of care**

- Became the first state to move to a cost model for rates in 2020, significantly improving revenues for providers.
- Proposed rate increases for state Fiscal Year 2024, using the cost model, that include competitive industry wages.

**Strengthen families through expanded eligibility and waived parent copayments**

- Implemented the largest expansion of the child care assistance program in state history, increasing income eligibility up to 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Waived all family copayments, making child care free for most New Mexico families.

**Advance a diverse, well-compensated, and credentialed early childhood workforce**

- Delivered a \$1,500 recruitment and retention bonus to every early educator who served during the pandemic.
- Provided a \$3/hour raise for more than 7,000 child care staff in the state.
- Funded stipends to cover living expenses for early childhood professionals pursuing early childhood degrees.

**Expand child care supply and access**

- Initiated a child care supply building grant with federal relief funding that is on track to create more than 1,200 new child care slots in communities where they are needed most.

Biography  
Elizabeth Groginsky, Cabinet Secretary  
New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department

Elizabeth Groginsky has more than two decades of executive leadership experience administering public early childhood agencies and non-profit organizations at the national, state, and local levels.

In November 2019, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Groginsky as the first cabinet secretary for the state's newly created Early Childhood Education and Care Department. Prior to this appointment, Secretary Groginsky had spent considerable time in Northern New Mexico in the early to mid-1990s with her brother, a Santa Fe chef, and her aunt, a cancer researcher at the Los Alamos National Lab.

Secretary Groginsky began her early childhood career in Colorado, where she served as a lead evaluator for a child care quality improvement initiative in the City and County of Denver, served as a Head Start family services coordinator, later administered a county Head Start program, and then directed Colorado's Head Start State Collaboration Office.

Prior to her appointment as ECECD Secretary, she served as the assistant superintendent of early learning for the District of Columbia (D.C.), where she administered programs to ensure equal access to quality services for the District's most vulnerable children and their families and she implemented one of only eight state Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grants nationwide. In 2009, D.C. was first in the nation to pursue universal pre-K and today has the highest participation rate in the U.S., with 83 percent of 4-year-olds and 69 percent of 3-year-olds enrolled.

Since ECECD began in July 2020, Secretary Groginsky has established New Mexico as a national early childhood leader by establishing innovative and systemic policy changes, securing sustainable and predictable funding for programs and services, and increasing compensation and professional supports for the early childhood workforce. These efforts have resulted in improved outcomes for families, children, and the child care industry in New Mexico. Under her leadership, New Mexico was the first state in the nation, along with D.C., to set child care reimbursement rates at the actual cost of care and to expand access to free child care for most New Mexico families.

Before joining the D.C. Superintendent's office, Secretary Groginsky directed early childhood education for United Way Worldwide, where she helped expand the number of communities collecting and using population-based early childhood data. In addition, she served as the first executive director of the Early Childhood Data Collaborative, a national coalition to improve state policies and practices in the development and use of early childhood data systems.

Secretary Groginsky holds a master's degree in social sciences from the University of Colorado at Denver and a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland.