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Highlights

Senate Confirmed Secretaries DeVos and Price

Last week the Senate's process for confirming cabinet secretaries continued with full-chamber votes. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos was confirmed on a [50-50 tie](#) vote that Vice President Pence broke. Later in the week the Senate [confirmed](#) Tom Price as Secretary of Health and Human Services with a 52-47 party line vote. Groups like [New America](#) and [Brookings](#) have offered insights into what these new leaders could mean for early childhood education.

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Federal Updates

Immigration

In the first few days of taking office, President Trump signed a series of [Executive Orders](#) related to border security, immigration, and refugees. Statements from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and [CLASP](#) emphasize the importance of protecting children and families in the midst of these changes.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- The new administration paused the ESSA accountability regulation put into effect under President Obama. The [regulation](#) will be delayed for 60 days while it undergoes review, which according to Education Week could cause confusion for states as the regulations also stipulated when ESSA state plans were due to the US Department of Education.
- The accountability regulation is also being scrutinized in Congress through Congressional Review Act resolutions targeting it and the Obama administration's teacher preparation program regulations. The [House Rules Committee](#) considered the resolutions and then both cleared the House and will be sent to the Senate for consideration. The White House has signaled Donald Trump will sign them. Passage would mean the US Department of Education would be barred from writing

similar rules until a new law is passed.

Health

President Trump signed an Executive Order to weaken the [Affordable Care Act](#). A statement from [health groups](#), including the American Academy of Pediatrics, calls for Congress to protect patients' access to health services.

Poverty

The US Department of Health and Human Services released [updated guidelines](#) for the poverty measure to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index.

Early Learning

At Congress' request, the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services released ["Joint Interdepartmental Review of All Early Learning Programs for Children Less Than 6 Years of Age,"](#) a report in response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue (GAO-12-342SP). The report noted "the long-standing federal investment in early learning and care reflects recognition of the diversity of children's and working families' needs" and "Despite the many children who benefit from these programs and investments, many more eligible children cannot be served with the current funding levels."

Family Supportive Housing

The Administration for Children and Families and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) published the ["Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Supportive Housing"](#), a new tool to complement the ["Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Shelters."](#)

Paid Family Leave

In conjunction with the 24th anniversary of the signing of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) that created protections for protected unpaid work leave, Sen. Gillibrand lead a group of 27 Senators to reintroduce the [Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act \(FAMILY\)](#) that would enhance these protections and make them more accessible to millions of families by creating a "universal, gender-neutral paid family and medical leave program."

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Policy Trends & Analysis

Immigration

The Center for Law and Social Policy [shared resources](#) from the US Department of Education and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to support young children in immigrant families.

Prekindergarten

The Education Commission of the States released its report "[State Pre-K Funding 2016-17 Fiscal Year: Trends and Opportunities](#)" detailing state investments in prekindergarten programs and opportunities under ESSA.

Child Care

Child Trends [released recommendations](#) for state Executives and Legislatures on research-based policy solutions to improve child care and early education.

Early Education

The Opportunities Exchange published a new report by Louise Stoney called "[Quality at Scale: Supporting Sustainable, High-Quality Early Care and Education](#)," that looks at supporting the management framework-share services-with state policy.

Medicaid and Home Visiting

The Center for American Progress released a new report detailing state [best practices](#) in supporting home visiting using Medicaid funds.

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New Research

Infants and Toddlers

A [new study published](#) in Child Development found that the high-quality, center-based early childhood education offered at Educare has a positive impact on the development of financially disadvantaged infants and toddlers. The randomized control trial (RCT) study found that Educare children after one year of enrollment, at approximately age 2, had significantly higher English language skills, fewer parent reports of problem behaviors and more positive parent-child interactions than children who did not attend Educare. [Read more](#).

Immigration

The Center for Migration Studies [released a report](#) outlining the social and economic costs to families and children if mass deportation were to take place.

Children and Families

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion at the U.S. Department of Agriculture released "[Expenditures on Children by Families, 2015](#)," details the costs of raising children.

Fatherhood and Preschool Children

Engaging fathers of preschool children in parenting-interventions can have improved outcomes for both parents and children according to a [randomized control trial](#) published in the Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology.

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Upcoming Events

February 26-28, 2017

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is hosting its [Public Policy Forum](#) in Washington, DC.

March 5-7, 2017

Feeding America and the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is hosting its [National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference](#) in Washington, DC.

March 22-23, 2017

The Ounce of Prevention Fund is hosting the 3rd annual Excellence in the Early Years: District Leadership Summit in Chicago, IL. The Summit provides an opportunity for district leaders and experts to come together from around the country to share innovative birth-through-3rd grade strategies and local practices that are helping students meet their full potential in the early years and beyond. The application to attend is now available on the [Summit website](#).

June 27-29, 2017

QRIS National Learning Network is hosting the [QRIS National Meeting](#) in Dallas, TX.

June 28-30, 2017

The Education Commission of the States will be hosting its [2017 National Forum on Education Policy](#) in San Diego on June 28-30 at the Hotel Del Coronado.

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News and Resources

US Department of Education

[Education Week reports](#) on the unclear impact of President Trump's Executive Order to

reduce the number of regulations on the U.S. Department of Education.

ESSA

First Five Years Fund has developed a [new resource](#) to serve as a helpful tool for states writing innovative ESSA early learning plans. This shareable, downloadable resource highlights the law's express early learning provisions, as well as others that could strengthen and expand early childhood initiatives at the state and local level.

Early Childhood

- [Business Roundtable published](#) a new resource, "Why Reading Matters and What to Do About It: A CEO Action Plan to Support Improved U.S. Literacy Rates" that offers both a state policy blueprint for ensuring reading proficiency and nine ways for CEOs to promote reading.
 - [USA Today published](#) an op-ed from political opposites, George Miller and Rick Santorum, on the importance of coming together over early childhood education.
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Child Care

[NBC News reports](#) on Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's comments finding common ground with President Trump around child care legislation.

Pre-kindergarten

- [Governing writes](#) on the difficulty of funding universal pre-kindergarten and the city and state level.
 - [Education Week](#) reports that parents typically like their child's preschool even when rating systems find it to be of low quality.
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Mental Health

ZERO TO THREE [released a report](#) looking at early childhood mental health consultation as a strategy to help young children and families.

Home Visiting

Achieve OnDemand now offers live, online webinars and self-paced trainings designed specifically for home visitors and supervisors. Visit our [website](#) to see what is available. Or, email AchieveOnDemand@ounceofprevention.org with any questions.

News From The States

[AR](#) | [AZ](#) | [CA](#) | [CO](#) | [FL](#) | [GA](#) | [IL](#) | [IN](#) | [KS](#) | [ME](#) | [MI](#) | [MN](#) | [NH](#) | [NM](#) | [NY](#) | [TN](#) | [WI](#) |

Arkansas

- KATV in Little Rock [reports on research](#) that shows investing in pre-kindergarten may help reduce crime.

Arizona

- *The Arizona Republic* [published an op-ed](#) on importance of investing in early childhood education in the state.

California

- [The Sacramento Bee](#) published an op-ed on the importance of early education.
- [New America discusses](#) the efforts in Fresno, CA to support dual language learners.
- According to New America, California's undocumented children's health care [coverage could be in jeopardy](#) under President Trump.
- [89.3 KPCC writes](#) on finding the right rating system for the states preschool programs.

Colorado

- [Colorado House Bill 17-1042](#) to expand kindergarten to full-day advanced from the House Committee on Education.
- [Chalkbeat](#) reports on how a rural preschool in Colorado was able to pay preschool teachers more.
- A House Education panel passed a bill banning spanking children in schools or child care facilities according to [Aurora Sentinel](#).

Florida

- Governor Rick Scott is [proposing increasing funding](#) for pre-kindergarten in the state; however, this proposed increase would still keep funding levels below what they were in 2005.
 - [Tampa Bay Times](#) writes on the importance of early childhood education.
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Georgia

- [The Atlanta Journal Constitution](#) reports on Senate Bill 98 that would boost the building of pre-kindergarten facilities.
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Illinois

- The Illinois Comptroller provided long-delayed funding for the state's [BabyTalk program](#).
 - [Chicago Tribune reports](#) on social service providers who are struggling in the midst of the continued state budget crisis.
 - The Illinois State Board of Education released its [FY2018 budget proposal](#), which includes a 3.45% increase.
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Indiana

- [IndyStar reports](#) on the options lawmakers are considering for expanding pre-kindergarten.
 - [House Bill 1004](#)-which expands the state's pre-kindergarten program-advances from the Indiana House Committee, but some are concerned over its use of vouchers ().
 - At the end of January hundreds gathered in Indiana's State House to [show their support](#) for expanded pre-kindergarten at the "All In For Pre-K" rally.
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Kansas

- [The Topeka Constitutional Journal](#) publishes an op-ed on the importance of early childhood education.
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Maine

- Maine US Senator Angus King (I) alongside Sen. Richard Burr (R-North Carolina) have introduced the [Promoting Affordable Childcare for Everyone Act](#) to support child care for low- and middle-income parents.

Michigan

- [mLive reports](#) on start of construction of a new early childhood education program in Flint, Michigan. Partners for the project-including the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Flint, University of Michigan-Flint, Genesee Intermediate School District and Flint Community Schools-are consulting with leaders from the Educare network to inform development of the program.

Minnesota

- According to the [Star Tribune](#), Governor Mark Dayton proposed a \$75 million increase in funding for the state's pre-kindergarten program.

New Hampshire

- [WMUR](#) in New Hampshire reports on advocates' push for paid family and medical leave and increased child care funding.

New Mexico

- [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#) reports on how Santa Fe could pay for a prekindergarten program.
- According to [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#), a [House bill](#) to provide preschool teachers with \$2 million in tuition aid moved forward.
- [Albuquerque Journal reports](#) that a House bill to fund early childhood education by using funding through the state's permanent land grant fund cleared the first House committee.

New York

- [New York Daily News](#) reports on the lack of diversity in the city's prekindergarten

classrooms.

Tennessee

- [The Chattanooga reports](#) on fighting crime through investing in early childhood education not in more police.

Wisconsin

- Governor Scott Walker proposes [expanding funding](#) for the state's Earned Income Tax Credit, replacing the amount he cut from the program in 2011.

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The [Ounce national policy team](#) partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they advance a comprehensive agenda for at-risk children and families. We do this by providing individualized strategy and policy consultation and resources; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking across states; and supporting Educare Schools and the Educare Learning Network in the development of their policy and advocacy work.

The National Policy Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter that shares up-to-date and noteworthy developments in state and federal early childhood news, policy and funding changes, research, policy trends and analyses, upcoming events, etc. culled from diverse sources in the field. To subscribe, please visit our [website](#).



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