

What is the scope of the Common Start bill?

- **Would providers be obligated to take state assistance? Would families have to use financial assistance if they qualify for it?**
 - No, on both counts. This system would be optional for providers and families, and neither would be obligated to accept state funding
- **Would this bill change licensing requirements? Would it require teachers to seek new levels of education?**
 - No, this bill would not alter licensing requirements, nor would it change any requirements around teacher certification or training.
- **Would providers that formerly did not receive public funding be able to participate?**
 - Yes! The system that this bill envisions would not have restrictions related to how providers were funded prior to their participation. All EEC licensed or licensed exempt providers would be free to make their choice regarding participation in the new public funding based on what they think is best for them.
- **Would this system provide financial assistance to middle class families that have not had access to subsidies in the past?**
 - Yes, the system, once fully funded, would ensure that **all families** would have the option of using a subsidy to pay a copay of no more than 7% of their income for early education and child care, with providers receiving the remaining amount from EEC. This means that even families well above middle incomes would want to use subsidies to help pay for their early education and child care.
- **Would this policy also include partial-day programs currently licensed by EEC?**
 - Yes, EEC-approved partial-day programs would be included in this system, along with full-day programs.

How would this bill impact provider revenue?

- **How would this system help providers?**
 - Once the system is funded, providers would receive new operating support dollars via Bedrock Funding, which would combine with competitive per-child reimbursement rates to cover the full cost of high quality early education and care. This increased funding would aid business stability, elevate educator pay, and improve providers' ability to deliver high quality education and child care. Family subsidies would increase the number of children in a community who are able to afford and attend high quality programs.
- **How would "full cost of quality care" be decided?**
 - The bill specifies a framework that EEC would use in calculating costs, but it does not create a precise formula or set quantitative targets. The bill lists major categories of costs that would need to be included by EEC, but the cost of care calculations would ultimately be created by the department (with public input) through their regulatory process and then updated yearly.
 - Costs are meant to vary by type of provider, ages of children serviced, and location at minimum, but EEC will be charged with finalizing how costs vary across the Commonwealth.
- **Would this new system regulate rates what providers can charge families?**
 - This bill does not regulate the public prices that providers charge families without

- subsidies. Providers that choose to participate in this system would receive new state “Bedrock Funding” to support their operations, and they would also be reimbursed on a per-child basis through a mix of subsidies and parent fees.
- This bill would scale up the subsidy system to allow families the option of using some form of voucher or contract slot to ensure they pay no more than 7% of their income for early education and child care. Vouchers and contract slots would be subject to reimbursement rates set by EEC, as they are today. For families not using subsidies, providers’ public prices would remain in use, as always.
 - [What form would financial assistance for families \(subsidies\) take in practice?](#)
 - As written, the bill does not create a new system for EEC to administer subsidies, and so it is assumed that EEC would use a system of vouchers and contracts. Reimbursement rates on these vouchers and contracts, however, would be based on the true cost of care rather than historic (very low) rate levels
 - [How would this system impact providers that haven’t taken subsidies in the past?](#)
 - Providers that have not accepted subsidies in the past but decide to accept new state funds in this system stand to gain measurably.
 - As funding to ensure affordability for all families expands, many children currently enrolled in “private pay” providers would qualify for state financial aid, and it is a policy goal that more providers are eager to participate in this system over time to access expanded funding.
 - The system would require the state to fund participating providers at the full cost of quality care to ensure that providers are able to not only sustain their operations, but grow them as the demand for childcare overall increases.
 - [For families that use financial assistance, how would reimbursement rates be determined?](#)
 - Voucher or contract rates would be set in relation to the cost of quality care calculation, and total compensation to providers (including Bedrock Funding) is intended to be higher than the so-called “market rate” for care. These rates of reimbursement would likely vary across different geographies and provider types.
 - [What is Bedrock Funding?](#)
 - Bedrock Funding is a direct-to-provider allocation that participating providers would receive to offset the operating costs of providing high quality early education and care, including higher educator pay. Bedrock Funding would help providers achieve this goal by providing the funds necessary to establish, run, and maintain healthy, high quality learning environments.
 - Bedrock funding is designed to meet unique program needs, such as compensating programs for service to high needs children and for addressing local shortages of care.
 - [How would Bedrock Funding allocations be determined?](#)
 - Bedrock Funding would be determined by the enrollment capacity (not attendance) of each provider. Specific funding amounts would be based on the final dollar figure that the Legislature appropriates to this system, and so eventual allocation sizes are not known at this time.
 - [How would this bill affect Family Childcare Providers?](#)
 - Family Childcare Providers (FCC’s) are a vital part of a mixed system of care, and this system would support their continued role as childcare providers.
 - Bedrock funding is designed in this bill to take into account the relatively higher costs faced by smaller providers, with the aim of providing FCC’s and small center-based

programs with funding to continue to be competitive with larger providers. This funding would provide a straightforward, predictable revenue source that does not vary if enrollment temporarily slips below full or if business is somehow disrupted (weather or health events, etc.)

What would be the responsibilities of providers participating in this system?

- **What would be the requirements to qualify for Bedrock Funding?**
 - All licensed and certain licensed exempt providers in the mixed-delivery system for early education and care would be eligible to opt-in if the provider:
 - Enters into a contractual agreement with EEC
 - Serves local community needs by agreeing to enroll children with subsidies, should they apply
 - Pays educators according to the new educator compensation guidance
 - Submits data required by EEC
- **What would be the procedure to apply for and receive Bedrock Funding?**
 - Providers would need to sign agreements for funding and adhere to the requirements set by EEC. To determine the extent of Bedrock Funding, providers will need to share key program details such as the size of program, the number of children served, public rates charged for care, and other data as determined by EEC. Once the allocation of Bedrock Funding is determined, the provider will receive regular payment. Bedrock Funding would continue as long as a provider maintains compliance with their EEC agreement.
- **What would the contractual agreement require from providers in terms of time, paperwork, and meetings?**
 - Specific requirements would be determined during the implementation phase with many opportunities for providers to comment and collaborate in the decision making with EEC. Bedrock Funding is intended to include resources needed to comply with EEC regulations and agreements.
- **Would there be limitations on how Bedrock Funding can be spent?**
 - Bedrock Funding would be direct-to-provider payments to support operating costs. Providers would be able to use Bedrock Funding to enhance the quality of the program, increase capacity, and increase teacher pay, and the bill does not detail specific limitations on use of these funds.
- **Would this bill change the quality rating system for programs?**
 - This bill does not detail a new EEC rating system, and EEC will be able to continue to modify its rating system to achieve quality and policy goals over time.
 - This system would expand overall funding in the childcare system in a way that promotes quality, sustainability, and provider growth.
- **If an FCC provider participates, how would agreements with EEC affect the provider's ability to set their hours of operation, yearly calendar, vacation, etc?**
 - The bill does not stipulate requirements for EEC agreements for accepting public funding. While EEC reserves the right to set certain requirements for providers that do accept state funding, the bill does not determine what details these contracts will contain. It will be vital to have an open discussion with EEC through the implementation of this bill to ensure that requirements for providers that accept state money serve their intended policy goal of sustaining a dynamic mixed system.

- Will my program be able to keep our existing teaching staff? What requirements (education attainment, professional development, training, etc.) will there be for educators to qualify for pay increases?
 - The bill does not require providers to change their staff composition in any way, and it creates no additional credentialing requirements. Bedrock Funding to providers would support increases in educator pay by providing funds directly to providers.

Family view: how will enrollment and family engagement change?

- How would this system change income ceilings for family subsidies?
 - Once adequately funded, families below 50% of statewide median income would be able to access early education and childcare subsidies without any copay. When fully funded, there would no longer be an income cut-off for subsidies. The subsidy system would ensure that family copayments on childcare vouchers or contracts do not exceed 7% of their annual income. This means that families in need of subsidies would be able to receive them, without a waiting list, and without being cut off if their income happens to go up.
- The families in my program currently receive subsidies, how would this bill affect them?
 - There is strong language in the bill protecting families that currently receive subsidies. Current subsidies will not decrease unless family income increases significantly. Families who would spend more than 7% of their income on childcare with their current subsidy will see their subsidy *increase*.
- Would this system require providers to take on special needs children they are not equipped to serve?
 - The system would provide additional funding for providers that disproportionately serve children with high needs to ensure they are adequately cared for. The system would also require EEC to play a more active role in placing high-needs children with providers that have the funding and infrastructure to serve them.
 - It is not a goal of this policy to create situations where providers are asked to care for children with complex needs that they are not able to nurture safely or successfully, and the bill would not alter any ADA obligations providers currently have or do not have.
 - Providers receiving public funding would be expected to serve their local communities, including those families that choose to use subsidies. Providers would be expected not to discriminate in serving their communities, keeping in mind that use of financial assistance for childcare is not a marker that a child has a disability or complex need.
- Would this bill force families to change schools?
 - No. This system would not obligate families to take any actions to change their enrollment.
 - This bill seeks to expand financial assistance to families and fund local providers in a way that sustains high quality early education. The bill is intended to encourage more providers to begin to serve families with financial assistance while increasing public funding in a way that makes such changes financially attractive to providers.
- How would this system ensure that more families have access to wraparound services like mental health counseling?
 - Using the Bedrock Funding allocations as a tool, this system would provide organizations that serve high-needs children with additional funding to provide

services like mental, physical, and developmental screenings. This bill would also direct EEC to more proactively direct parents of high-needs children towards programs that are equipped to serve them well.

Big Systems Questions

- **This bill seems ambitious, how would it be funded? What happens if it isn't fully funded?**
 - This bill is a tool that creates a framework for steering public investments over time. The bill itself does not contain revenue measures (it does not increase taxes), and so the legislature would need to appropriate the money needed to deliver affordability to families and needed compensation for providers and educators. Federal funding would likely be an important component of a strategy for fully funding this system.
 - Funding for family subsidies would scale up over time, with the lowest-income households getting subsidies first. Those not receiving subsidies would need to pay out-of-pocket, as they do today. Providers would never have to care for children without reimbursement.
- **What accountability measures would exist to determine whether the system is working as intended?**
 - EEC would be required to produce a wide variety of reports that will be required to ensure that funds are used appropriately and that public data is available to track the implementation of the system.
- **This plan expands EEC responsibilities substantially. How would the agency be able to administer it?**
 - The bill recognizes that EEC would require a substantial expansion of its resources in order to administer this new system. The bill details a process by which the agency would report out on its needs to the legislature for funding and personnel soon after the passage of the bill.