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Governor Hobbs Expands Child Care Options for Arizona Families

PHOENIX – Governor Katie Hobbs is taking action to ensure that more children in Arizona have access to affordable, quality child care and school-age programming. First, Governor Hobbs will offer more access and flexibility to families with school-age children (ages 5-12). The Governor has instructed the Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Department of Economic Security (DES) to broaden the types of afterschool, summer, and enrichment programs eligible for licensure by creating a separate child care license for “out-of-school time” programs. This will streamline the process for these programs to accept child care assistance by meeting the high quality standards in the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant.

In the coming months, DHS and DES will convene a broad group of stakeholders including providers, schools, youth development organizations, families, and others to provide their leadership and input to this process.

“Access to child care not only ensures that children are in a safe, caring environment, but it gives families the ability to work or pursue higher education or training,” said Governor Katie Hobbs. **“Organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence, and a diverse set of other stakeholders from across the state will collaborate on this effort together to provide more child care opportunities for families.”**

This effort finally responds to out of school time programs who have elevated this issue for a number of years. It also builds on the work done during this legislative session by Rep. Matt Gress who brought stakeholders together multiple times to further discuss expanding access to child care assistance.

Second, Governor Hobbs is taking action to provide direct relief to families by issuing a one-time summer child care payment of \$500 per child to cover the mandatory registration fees for children involved with the Department of Child Safety who participate in the Subsidized Child Care Program through DES. This includes children in foster care, kinship care, as well as children in families receiving in-home services who have recently participated in the child care assistance program.

“By improving access to basic needs like child care, we can strengthen the well-being of families facing the greatest barriers and prevent continued involvement with the child welfare system,” said Governor Hobbs. This opportunity will also provide relief to foster and kinship caregivers who provide support to children who are temporarily placed out of home.

Payments, which are made possible from federal COVID relief funds for child care, will start this summer. DCS caseworkers and staff will guide eligible families through the next steps in receiving payment.

In response to these actions, the below community partners have shared these quotes of support:

“Too many families and caregivers around Arizona struggle with the costs of out-of-school time and summer care for their young students. Parents need more choices for out-of-school time care, especially in rural communities. Working together, we can ensure that parents and caregivers can use their childcare assistance dollars in Boys & Girls Clubs and similar programs. The Arizona Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs looks forward to working with Governor Hobbs to create a license that addresses the unique operations of out-of-school time providers serving school-aged youth. We want to thank Governor Katie Hobbs and Representative Matt Gress for bringing together the childcare community to address these challenges.”
Marcia L. Mintz, President & CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley

"The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence (AzCASE) is excited to work with the Governor's Office, state agencies and other stakeholders to create a meaningful pathway that meets the unique needs of school-aged programs and provides more opportunities for families to access these critical programs."
Courtney C. Sullivan, Executive Director, Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence

"YMCA child care programs serve 0-12 year olds across the state, and 75% of the youth we serve receive financial support to participate. We are happy to hear that the State of Arizona is modernizing child care regulations and we look forward to participating in the process. This will increase access to high quality programs for all Arizonans."

Jenna Cooper, Government Relations, Arizona Alliance of YMCAs

"As a representative of Arizona's school leaders, ASA looks forward to participating in the process to create an out-of-school license. This would ease the burden that many school districts and their partner organizations face in becoming licensed to provide child care after school, before school and during the summer months, while still ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children."

Dr. Paul Tighe, Executive Director, Arizona School Administrators

"The Arizona Council of Human Service Providers is committed to ensuring quality childcare for all children and families. The work that the Governor's office is doing to support families, by expanding access to childcare funds, is essential to support working parents who need safe and reliable childcare. By investing in childcare, Governor Hobbs is investing in the well-being of our communities and the long-term growth of our economy."

Candy Espino, MBA, President & CEO, Arizona Council of Human Service Providers

"Arizona Early Childhood Education Association thanks the Governor's office for creating a licensed pathway specifically for school age providers that will increase quality and provide additional access for children and families needing this important type of care in Arizona. Additionally, we applaud DCS's commitment to Arizona families in providing additional child care funding for families. Arizona's early care and education community is committed to ensuring access and affordable child care to our most vulnerable children."

Barbie Prinster, Executive Director, Arizona Early Childhood Education Association

"The Arizona Early Childhood Alliance (AZECA) fully supports Governor Katie Hobbs' decision to expand options for school age children and update outdated or unnecessary rules for child care facilities. We believe that this is an important step towards improving the quality of childcare in Arizona and ensuring that all children have access to safe, affordable, and high-quality early childhood education."

Rebecca Gau and Diane Fellows, Co-Chairs Arizona Early Childhood Alliance

"The cost of child care has increased nearly 30% in recent years. Families, already struggling with the skyrocketing costs of housing and other basic needs, are facing the additional stress of finding safe, reliable, and affordable child care and early learning opportunities for their children while they are working. The Governor's proposals will not only expand the options for families but will put resources directly

into the hands of parents and caregivers allowing them to determine the best situation for their needs.”

Kelley Murphy, Interim President and CEO, Children’s Action Alliance

"The children and families whom this one-time child care funding in DCS care will impact are among Arizona's most vulnerable. Directing funds for basic needs like access to quality early child care is not just a smart investment for today, but for Arizona's future."

Melinda Morrison Gulick, CEO, First Things First

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