

President's Report
Executive Committee (Acting on Behalf of Board)
New Board Member Orientation
Hybrid (Charles Morris Conference Room and ZOOM)
Thursday, July 30, 2026

A. NCPC/DCDEE Updates / Legislative Updates

1. NCPC

- This month's special stories focus on **Parents for Higher Education at FTCC**. Subsidy was expanded to cover summer courses this year. Read about the impact that had on students.
- We are in contract with NCPC.
- The legislature passed their budget. Reports from Marta Hester are attached. There will be a Virtual Town Hall on August 21. Information with the link for the Town Hall will be sent once it is received.
- The FY2025-2026 Annual Audit process has started. We are in the first wave and many requests have been submitted. The next set of items is due August 14.
- Yearend is always busy. Fiscal closeout has occurred for NCPC, including the ACH for reversion. Planning & Evaluation, in collaboration with internal and external activities is nearing completion of 4th Quarter and year-end reporting due by July 31st.
- The annual required **Smart Start Direct Service Provider meeting will be held on August 24th**. The **Smart Start RFP Allocation Bidder's Meeting for the next 3-year cycle is scheduled for September 15th**. Applications are due November 17th. The review process will begin in January 2027. Board and committee members are encouraged to consider participating as reviewers.
- DPIL – There is no longer a waiting list and the NCPC system is open to take applications. We currently are serving over 11,000 children.

2. DCDEE

- **SWCDC monitoring completed for Region 5 Contracts with no findings.** The CORE contract closed out June 30, 2026.
- **Child Care Resources Inc. has released the RFA for Child Care Resource and Referral Services for the South-Central Region.** Letter of Intent to apply was submitted July 28 and the proposal is due August 7. Taking to Executive Committee for approval to apply and accept grant if awarded.
- **NC Pre-K**
 - The contract from DCDEE for NC Pre-K for the new fiscal was executed July 28.
 - Contract preparation for providers is in process. This is the third year of a 3 year-contract cycle.
 - **NC Pre-K Let's Get Enrolled – Applications for the 2026-2027 school year continue to be processed.** Please share the URL: **LetsGetEnrolled.com**. Contact Ar-Nita Davis (adavis@ccpfc.org) with any questions.
 - The Site Selection Committee is gearing up for reviewing applications for the next 3-year cycle.

3. State and Federal Level

- For additional updates, refer to the NC Center for Nonprofits' [July 24th Public Policy update](#).

4. Local Level – FTCC has approached the Programs Department to collaborate with their Lead Teacher Academy Pilot. The Academy is slated to start in late August.

B. Grant Opportunities/Updates/RFPs

- The **Workforce Development Program** participants are enrolling in additional coursework for the

Special Needs Certificate starting in August in collaboration with Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC). This coursework will wrap up the program funded by ARPA funds.

- **Cumberland County Government awarded PFC \$218,700 for a Community Grant.** Details of the award are still in process with contracting.
- **Blue Cross NC Opportunities** – The Faith-based initiative to support church programming for the neurodivergent population and their families is in process with training planned for October. United Way coordinated an Imagination Library Story Time on July 24 at the Beyond Blue Neighborhood Center. Our own Kathleen Hoffler was the reader for the event. The Cumberland County Literacy Council is a collaborative initiative by the United Way to unite both public and private organizations to address literacy. Kathleen is a Literacy Ambassador through the Literacy Council, supporting Imagination Library Story Times throughout the county. We are excited about these new collaborative opportunities.

C. Building Sustainability and Organizational Sustainability & Succession Planning

- Representatives for the **Building Sustainability Work Group** met with NCPC and DCDEE on June 17 in Raleigh to go through the process required by DCDEE due to state funding being used to purchase the building. Additional discussions are occurring and the Work Group will meet on August 12 to review options to bring to the August Board Meeting.
- **Organizational Sustainability & Succession Planning are part of the Board's Strategic Plan Update from December 2025.** Meetings have occurred to gather feedback regarding options for potential partnering and collaboration with the neighboring Robeson Partnership for Children. Summaries of discussions with staff, the Board, and Board Committees have been prepared by PFC leadership. Robeson County followed a similar process. Mary Sonnenberg will be meeting with Jessica Lowery-Clark on August 2 to review the summaries and prepare presentations to each respective Board of Directors.

D. Staff Updates

- Led by Carolin Hardy, Monique Snedeker, and Johann Betancourt, staff have refreshed the display case in the common area of the 200 suite and the two main conference rooms, Conference Room B and the Charles Morris Room. You can also see the updated display in the downstairs lobby by the Library.
- Tamiko Colvin was selected internally as PFC's Community Engagement & Partnership Specialist with the Community Engagement team effective June 29. Tamiko has over 16 years of service with Programs, most recently serving as the Executive Specialist for Programs.
- Krystal Pate joined PFC on July 13 as the Communications & Digital Media Specialist with the Community Engagement team. With over 10 years of experience in film, media production, visual storytelling, and design, Krystal excels at translating ideas into compelling experiences that connect audience to missions, goals, and results.
- **Recruiting Program Specialist NC Pre-K – this is a Full-time position.** For more information about this position and to apply, please visit our careers page at ccpfc.org/hr/careers.

E. Events/Recognitions

- **Kindness Awards – September 2026.** Nomination have closed. Award presentations to honorees will be during the week of September 21. We need Board members to assist with award presentations. If you are available to assist, email Tamiko Colvin, Community Engagement & Partnership Specialist at tcolvin@ccpfc.org. Kindness Awards are done in conjunction with Smart Start Month in September.
- **Little Land on the Farm 2026 at the County Fair – Save the dates September 4 – 13, 2026.** Let us know if you can volunteer.
- **Grilled Cheese Festival – Save the date for Saturday, November 7, 2026.** Consider sponsorship, table sponsorship, vendor, and volunteer opportunities. Contact dmalvesti@ccpfc.org. **Presale tickets are on sale at <https://ccpfc.org/cheesy/>.**
- **Little Land 2027 – Save the date for Saturday, March 13, 2027, 10:00 am – 2:00 PM, Crown Expo Center.**

Special Stories July 2026: Summer Subsidy funding for Students

Student 1

The Parents for Higher Education (PFHE) summer program made a big difference for me this summer. As a nursing student and parent, balancing school, childcare, and everyday responsibilities can be stressful. Receiving this support helped take some of that stress away so I could stay focused on my education instead of worrying as much about childcare and finances. This opportunity allowed me to continue working toward my goal of becoming a registered nurse while knowing my children were being cared for. I am very thankful for the support PFHE provided, and I appreciate everyone who makes this program possible. It has encouraged me to keep pushing forward, and I hope this program continues to help other student parents reach their educational goals.

Student 2

The support I am receiving from PFHE (Parents for Higher Education) has made a big difference in my summer by helping me pay for daycare while I still have classes for my program during the summer. Knowing childcare is covered has allowed me to stay focused and keep showing up consistently for my program. Instead of worrying about money, I could invest my time in coursework, staying on track with my schedule, and giving myself the stability to finish strong. This opportunity has helped me make meaningful progress toward my goal of graduating from the dental assisting program this summer. With PFHE easing the financial burden of daycare, I was able to work toward my education more confidently and with less stress. Even beyond the classes themselves, this support strengthened my momentum and reminded me that I'm building a better future for myself and my children.

Student 3

I was able to receive funding from the program for my daughter's daycare. Since I am in the nursing program, my third semester falls in the summer and I still needed childcare. I was nervous going into summer because I knew funding might be more limited. I had warned my husband in advance and talked with my mom so she could help us. Our daughter's tuition is around \$1,080 a month and that is extremely hard to come up with on my husband's income alone. I knew this summer we might not be able to do as much with our daughter as we wanted because money would be tight.

Fortunately, I was able to get funding, and our budget has eased up some. We are still able to take our three-year-old places she enjoys this summer like the aquarium and museums because we are not worrying about sourcing childcare. Since my mom is no longer having to pay a huge portion of our childcare, she has been able to take some vacation and come visit us. My husband and I have also been able to take money and invest in our daughter by signing her up for swimming lessons this summer. We would not have been able to do so if we were paying for her daycare. We love to keep her busy and provide enriching experiences for her and now we can do so while also creating family memories. The Parent's For Higher Education Grant has been such a blessing for my family.

Student 4

Receiving this summer funding has taken a huge amount of stress off my shoulders. Being in nursing school, balancing classes, clinicals, and family responsibilities can be overwhelming, and having this support allowed me to focus more on my education instead of constantly worrying about finances. It gave me the opportunity to stay on track with my goals without having to sacrifice time that I needed for studying and preparing for the upcoming semester.

This experience reminded me how much of a difference even temporary financial assistance can make for students. It helped cover some of my everyday expenses and gave me peace of mind during a busy time of year. I'm incredibly grateful to have been selected for this program, and I truly appreciate the investment that was made in my education and future. I hope this program continues because I know it can make the same positive impact for many other students.

Student 5

I am very thankful for the childcare assistance I received this summer. As a full-time student and mom of two, it helped take away a lot of financial stress and allowed me to focus on my classes without constantly worrying about childcare costs. Because of this support, I was able to stay on track with school and continue working toward my goal of becoming a dental hygienist. I truly appreciate this opportunity, and it has made a meaningful difference for both me and my family.

Student 6

The summer funding that was available for this summer semester helped my family and I out tremendously. Being in the nursing program, I cannot opt out of a semester and this summer semester was a requirement. If I did not have the support of the PFHE program, I would have had to drop out of the nursing program. My family and I cannot afford childcare being a military family and myself just going to school at the moment. The PFHE program made it possible for me to continue pursuing my dream in earning a degree to become a future nurse! I am extremely grateful for the opportunity that the PFHE program has granted me and made going to school possible for me!

From: Marta Hester <mhester@smartstart.org>

Sent: Friday, July 17, 2026 9:13 AM

Subject: Smart Start Network Public Policy Update for Week of July 13 - 17, 2026

Good morning,

Once again, we are extremely grateful for the \$14.8 million new recurring and nonrecurring funding the Smart Start Network received in the 2026 Appropriations Bill. The Smart Start Network, along with other early care advocates, are equally excited about the \$97 million, recurring (federal Child Care and Development Funds) that supports a higher reimbursement rate and establishes a new statewide floor. Beginning October 1, 2026, the budget increases the child care subsidy market rate to the 75th percentile of the 2023 Child Care Market Rate for providers and creates a statewide reimbursement rate floor to ensure providers in counties with low rates receive at least the statewide rate based on the 2021 Market Rate Survey.

The recommendation to increase the reimbursement rate and establish a floor is one of the top recommendations of the Child Care and Early Care and Education Task Force. The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education will release the finalized, approved rates soon to providers and the public. What a victory for NC!

I encourage you to thank your state legislator if you are comfortable doing so. *The NC General Assembly has temporarily adjourned until **Monday, July 27, 2026***. Legislators will be completing unfinished business and address any mistakes or clarifications needed in the State budget, which means --- another technical corrections bill.

STATE UPDATE

NC General Assembly Resources

2026 State Budget Information

- [SB 257](#) 2026 Appropriations Act.
- [HB 56](#) 2026 Budget Technical Corrections.

[HJR 1244: Adjournment Resolution - Resolution 2026-5](#)

- Allows the General Assembly to reconvene July 27, 2026, at 12:00 noon. (Note: Voting session that week is to be determined.)
- Specifies the types of activities the legislature is allowed to undertake once reconvened.

Constitutional Amendments Update

[HB 443: Const. Amendment: Council of State Vacancies](#) (Primary Sponsors: Representatives Kyle Hall, R-Stokes; Hugh Blackwell, R-Burke; Sarah Stevens, R-Surry; Cody Huneycutt, R-Stanly)

- A constitutional amendment to go on the November 2026 general election ballot asking voters whether to change how vacancies are filled for key statewide offices to include: Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Attorney General, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor, and Commissioner of Insurance
- Requires the Governor to appoint replacements from a list of three provided by the departing official's political party, rather than choosing independently, until an election fills the seat.
- **Passed House, Senate Rules Committee and headed to the Senate floor.**

NC's Business Ranking

CNBC ranks North Carolina second among the best states for business with Ohio taking the number one spot. Child care is part of the "Quality of Life" category and is scored based on the availability, affordability, and quality of early childhood education and care services, which CNBC considers important for attracting and retaining workers. Therefore, child care is a significant subfactor in this category. According to AXIOS Charlotte, NC also lost ground in the quality of life category due to being one of the worst states for workers, citing a low minimum wage and lack of paid family and sick leave among other considerations.

- [Top States for Business in America 2026: Full rankings](#)
- [Governor Stein Celebrates North Carolina's #1 Economy, Calls on General Assembly to Lower the Cost of Living | NC Governor](#)

FEDERAL UPDATE

Fiscal Year Federal Appropriation Bills Update

The U.S. House and Senate returned this week. Senate appropriators have made little progress ahead of the September 30, 2026, deadline to fund the federal government. As of June 30, 2026, all twelve appropriations bills have advanced out of the House Appropriations Committee, and three of the twelve bills have been passed by the full House. Earlier this week, the House passed the appropriations bill to fund the State Department. The Senate has yet to begin formal consideration making it highly unlikely Congress will pass all twelve appropriations bills before FY 2027 begins on October 1, 2026. Considering the progress on the appropriation bills, or lack thereof, Congress will probably have to pass a continuing resolution.

Federal Rule Finalized on "Do No Harm" Provision and Impact on ECE Programs

Information was shared previously on the proposed changes to student loans and the opportunity to submit comments on new regulations related to the *Do No Harm* provision in H.R.1, One Big Beautiful Bill. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) published the final set of regulations in the Federal Register [here](#). For a summary of the changes that occurred between the proposed and the final rules, see the official press release [here](#).

I understand the final rule does not make significant changes from the public comment version; however, there was extensive feedback from the early care and education (ECE) community. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is continuing to explore other avenues for mitigating the potential impact of this rule on ECE postsecondary programs. The Department did make some adjustments to the program cohort aggregation methodology for small programs that may benefit smaller ECE programs. NAEYC's submission on the draft regulations [can be found here](#). More information will be provided about the impact and next steps regarding the higher education early childhood education programs and the ECE profession at large, as it becomes available.

- [U.S. Department of Education Issues Final Rule to Hold All Colleges and Universities Accountable for Low-Earning Programs | U.S. Department of Education](#)

Child Care and Development Fund Rule on Restoring Flexibility in CCDF

This is a reminder the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) rule change became effective on Monday, July 13, 2026. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) argued that the old rule was costly, difficult to implement and failed to allow states enough flexibility. See below for more about specifics on the rule changes.

- [Federal Register: Restoring Flexibility in the Child Care and Development Fund \(CCDF\)](#)
- [What Does the 2026 CCDF Final Rule Change? | NAEYC](#)

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

National League of Cities State of Cities

2026

The National League of Cities [State of the Cities 2026](#) Mayoral Survey reveals that mayors continue to seek ways to activate their local economy by raising revenue and insufficient child care remains a top economic challenge again in 2026.

NAEYC 2026 Workforce Survey

NAEYC's Annual ECE Workforce Survey provide critical insights into the challenges and experiences of early childhood educators across the country. The surveys are the most comprehensive source of data on the ECE workforce in the nation. Survey findings inform policymakers, the media, and the public—strengthening advocacy efforts at the federal and state level. See the links to complete the survey below, available in both English and Spanish. Please share it with your networks. The survey window is July 13 through 27, 2026.

- [ECE Workforce Survey: Summer Spotlight on Regulation and Compliance](#)
- [Encuesta de la Fuerza Laboral de ECE: Enfoque de verano sobre regulación y cumplimiento](#)

Center for American Progress Report

The Center for American Progress published [a new report](#) that showcases how the early childhood education and K-12 systems should work together to support children's early literacy and reading achievement.

The next Smart Start Network Public Policy Meeting will be held on **Friday, July 31, 2026**, to include any new applicable developments, if any, when the NC General Assembly return the week of July 27th. A link will be disseminated today. Also, mark your calendars for the virtual NC Congressional Delegation Town Hall sponsored by The NC Partnership for Children and Smart Start Network to be held on **Friday, August 21, 2026, from 10:00am to 11:30am**. Feel free to invite staff and board members to the town hall. More information will be distributed soon.

Thank you,

Marta



Marta T. Hester, M.A.

Director of Public Policy and Advocacy
984.221.1221

The North Carolina Partnership for Children

1100 Wake Forest Rd, Raleigh, NC 27604

From: Marta Hester <mhester@smartstart.org>

Sent: Friday, July 24, 2026 9:09 AM

Subject: Smart Start Network Public Policy Update for Week of July 20 - 24, 2026

Good morning,

The NC General Assembly returns next week. The Senate will return next week only with the House to return the week of August 3, 2026. Legislators will be completing unfinished business and address any mistakes or clarifications needed in the 2026 Appropriations Act through a second technical corrections bill.

In a recent interview, Dr. Devdutta (Dev) Sangvai, Secretary of North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), expressed his gratitude to state legislators for working so closely with the Governor's Office to help meet DHHS funding needs as the agency prepares to tackle a greater share of costs from the federal government. By the end of this year, DHHS must comply with major changes to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The NC Office of the State Auditor (OSA) conducted a performance audit to evaluate the Division of Child Development and Early Education's (DCDEE) oversight and monitoring of licensed child care. Auditors found that DCDEE documented that all required annual compliance visits were conducted, and that the agency verified that corrective actions were implemented for noncompliance identified during annual compliance visits. However, OSA reported there are areas for improvement as outlined in [DHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education - Performance Audit Report](#)

STATE UPDATES

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Impact on NC Counties

North Carolina is one of 10 states where counties administer SNAP and the shift from paying 50% of the costs to paying 75% will fall to local governments. As previously discussed, counties have grave concerns and been extremely vocal through state media outlets that the state budget places the majority of new SNAP costs resulting from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1) on counties. Counties will also be responsible for paying a cumulative \$52 million in increased program administration fees this upcoming fiscal year. Furthermore, the budget also requires all counties to pay the full state match for SNAP benefit costs, if NC does not achieve the target determination error rate.

State Child Care Facility Update

May 2026

- The total number of facilities that closed in May 2026 was **30**: 15 centers, 12 family child care homes and 3 religious-sponsored (GS 110-106).
- The total number of facilities that opened in May 2026 was **25**: 18 centers and 7 family child care homes.

June 2026

- The total number of facilities that closed in June 2026 was **33**: 20 centers, 9 family child care homes and 4 religious-sponsored (GS 110-106).
- The total number of facilities that opened in June 2026 was **29**: 18 centers and 11 family child care homes.
- [With childcare centers closing, schools are stepping up to meet a growing need -](#)

Child Care and Early Education Task Force

Kristi Snuggs, President, Early Years, was recently appointed as a child care resource and referral network representative to serve on the Governor's Task Force on Child Care and Early Education.

FEDERAL UPDATES

Fiscal Year 2027 Federal Appropriations Bills Update

On Tuesday, July 21, 2026, the U.S. House approved a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government until December 4, 2026. Currently on the horizon are upcoming November midterm elections, August recess, and no movement on the 12 appropriations bills in the Senate. The CR, *2027 Continuing Appropriations Act (H.R. 9770)*, now heads to the Senate, which is scheduled to be in town through the first week of August while the House will be in recess the entire month of August.

As a reminder, the House Appropriations Committee has advanced all 12 annual appropriations bills that fund the federal government with three approved by the full House.

Strengthening Transparency and Oversight to Prevent (STOP) Child Care Fraud Act

On June 14, 2026, U.S. Senators Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) introduced the Strengthening Transparency and Oversight to Prevent (STOP) Child Care Fraud Act. The proposed legislation incorporates feedback from a hearing held several months ago by the Senate HELP Committee on eliminating fraud and abuse of federal child care funding. According to Senators Cassidy and Tuberville, the legislation would amend the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) by strengthening federal oversight, improving verification methods, and increasing reporting requirements.

- Read the full bill text [here](#).
- Read the full section-by-section [here](#).
- Read the one-pager [here](#).

U.S. Department of Education Downsizing

The congressional House Education and Workforce Committee Chair Tim Walberg (R-MI) announced the introduction of 10 bills to begin codifying the Trump administration's plan to reduce and/or eliminate the Department of Education. For specific information, see the links below:

- [@EdWorkforceCmte Introduces "Less Bureaucracy, Better Education" Legislative Package | Committee on Education & the Workforce](#)
- [U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon Issues Statement on the House Education and Workforce Committee's "Less Bureaucracy, Better Education" Legislative Package | U.S. Department of Education](#)

RESOURCES

First Five Years Fund's (FFYFs) 2026 State Fact Sheets

FFYFs 2026 State Fact Sheets on child care and early learning provide state-by-state data for all 50 states and Washington, DC.

- [FFYF State Fact Sheets: Child Care and Early Learning, 2026](#)
- [FFYF 2026 NC.pdf](#)

KFF and Medicaid Webinar

KFF and States Newsroom held a webinar on Thursday, July 23, 2026 on, [Medicaid and the Road Ahead: Spending Cuts, Work Requirements and What's Next for States, Providers and Families](#)

REMINDER: NAEYC 2026 Workforce Survey

NAEYC's Annual ECE Workforce Survey provide critical insights into the challenges and experiences of early childhood educators across the country. The surveys are the most comprehensive source of data on the ECE workforce in the nation. Survey findings inform policymakers, the media, and the public—strengthening advocacy efforts at the federal and state level. See the links to complete the survey below, available in both English and Spanish. Please share it with your networks. The survey window closes July 27, 2026.

- [ECE Workforce Survey: Summer Spotlight on Regulation and Compliance](#)
- [Encuesta de la Fuerza Laboral de ECE: Enfoque de verano sobre regulación y cumplimiento](#)

Since I understand there will be another technical corrections bill and potential movement on other proposed legislation when the NC General Assembly returns, I'll include any new updates during the virtual public policy meeting next Friday. Meanwhile, please mark your calendars for the virtual **NC Congressional Delegation Town Hall** to be held on **August 21, 2026, from 10:00am to 11:30am**. Feel free to invite staff and board members to the town hall. The roster of participating congressional members will be announced next week!

Thank you,

Marta



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