



Wednesday, June 29, 2022

Supporting Georgia's Early Care and Learning System with COVID-19 Relief Funding



Housekeeping

- The webinar is being recorded.
- All participants are muted.
- Type your **questions** or **comments** into the **Q&A** at any time. We will answer periodically during the session.
- Tomorrow, the recording and slides, study report, and executive summary will be posted online. Links will be emailed to webinar participants and registrants when ready.

Our Focus Today

- Overview of Georgia's early care and learning system
- COVID-19 relief funding supporting early care and education in Georgia
- Urban Institute stakeholder engagement and study recommendations
- Georgia's next steps

Today's Speakers

Urban Institute

- Teresa Derrick-Mills, Principal Research Associate, Urban Institute
- Cary Lou, Research Associate, Urban Institute
- Diane Schilder, Senior Fellow, Urban Institute

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

- Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
- Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner, Quality Innovations and Partnerships, DECAL

Overview of Georgia and Early Learning

Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner



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BRIGHT FROM THE START

What is DECAL?

- Georgia's Pre-K
- Licensing and regulation
- Quality Rated, Georgia's Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Georgia's subsidy program
- Nutrition services
- Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Inclusion and behavior support services
- Infant and toddler supports
- Several quality initiatives, professional development programs, and grants



Early Care and Learning in Georgia

- 159 counties:
 - 29 in Metro Atlanta area (10 rural, 19 urban)
 - 110 other rural
 - 20 other urban
- 3,121 child care learning centers and 1,234 family child care learning homes
- Currently, 35,533 are families receiving subsidies for 65,342 children with an active scholarship (Childcare and Parent Services)
- 2,855 providers are Quality Rated (1, 2, or 3 stars)
- In the 2021–22 school year, Georgia’s Pre-K served 73,200 children



Federal COVID-19 Funding and Previous/Ongoing Projects

Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner



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Overview of Federal COVID-19 Funding

Funding received:

- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act
- Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act

Funding used to mitigate negative impacts of COVID-19 on the child care industry by:

- Stabilizing child care
- Supporting families' access to high-quality child care
- Supporting the early education workforce

	Award Amount	Obligated Amount
CARES	\$144,539,371	\$144,539,371
CRRSA	\$403,660,875	\$403,660,875
ARP Discretionary	\$605,401,332	\$494,583,600
ARP Stabilization	\$968,278,648	\$930,131,958
TOTAL	\$2,121,880,226	\$1,972,915,804



Projects with Federal COVID-19 Funding

- STABLE (Short-Term Assistance Benefit for Licensed Entities)
 - STABLE provides payments to licensed child care programs.
- Various CAPS (Childcare and Parent Services) initiatives
 - ACCESS (Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements)
 - CAPS expansion and Quality Rated bonus payments increase
 - Essential services workforce scholarships
 - Emergency payment policies
- POWER (Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition)
 - The POWER program provides supplemental payments to all eligible early learning professionals and staff in Georgia.



Projects with Federal COVID-19 Funding

- SHARE (School-age Help and Relief Effort)
 - Grants offered to support providers caring for school-age children when school was held virtually
- Teacher Supply Grants
 - Grants offered to eligible early learning professionals to purchase classroom and program supplies
- COVID-19 Test and PPE Grants
 - Grants offered to licensed providers to purchase COVID-19 test kits, personal protective equipment, and cleaning supplies



Engaging the Urban Institute for Stakeholder Engagement

Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations & Partnerships



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Why Pursue Stakeholder Engagement?

- Historic opportunity with COVID-19 relief funds
- Temporary nature of the funds
- Invest in long-term systemic changes
- Minimize the possibility of recipients encountering benefit cliffs
- Need for input from representative group of stakeholders



Expected Project Outcomes

- Use of multi-method approach to solicit feedback from diverse group of stakeholders—families, providers, ECE workforce
- Clear set of recommendations that could be translated into tangible, doable projects
- Research that provides a snapshot related to the ECE system
- Identified opportunities for future research

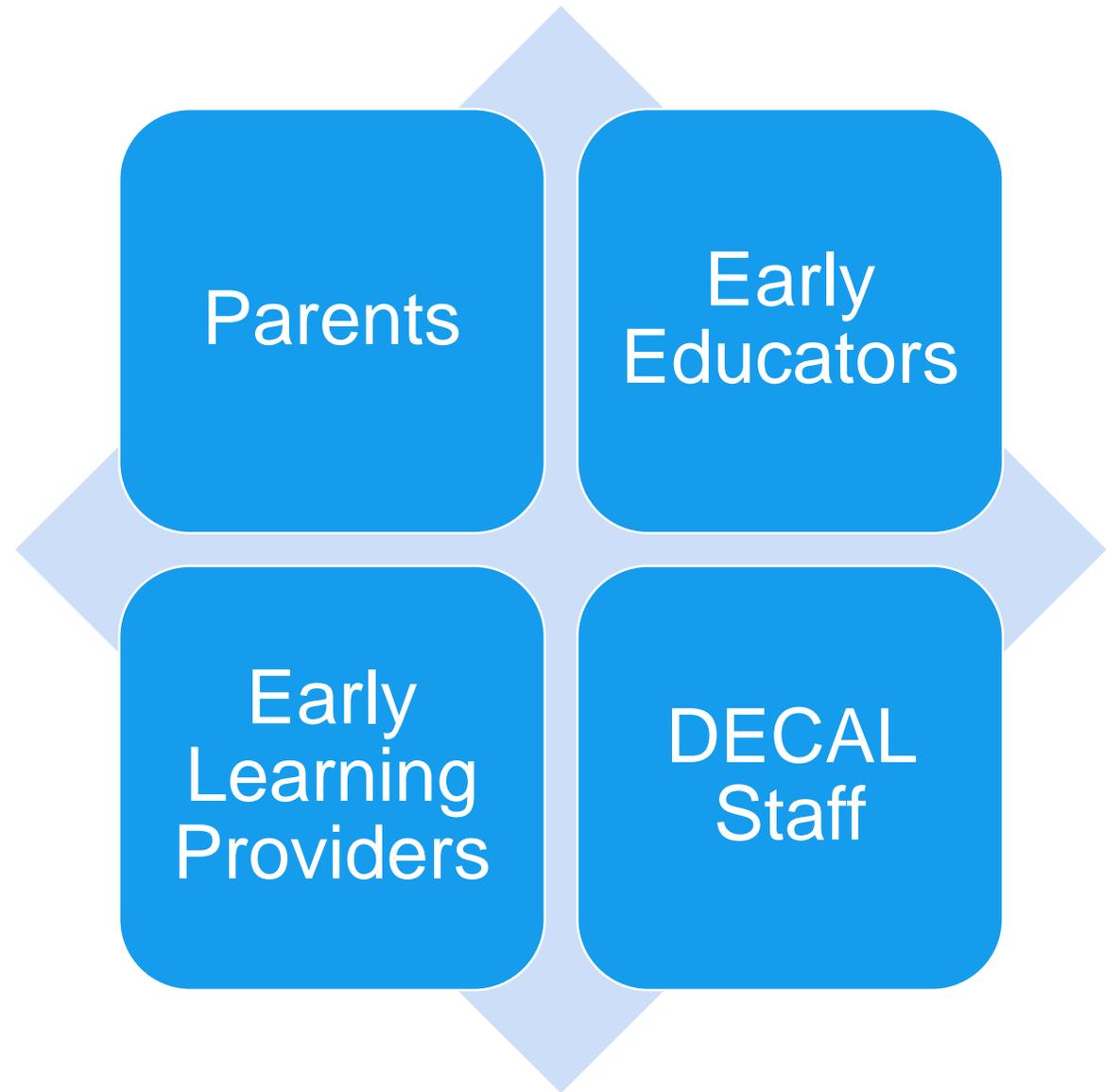


Urban Institute Stakeholder Engagement

Gather perspectives, experiences, and recommendations from the people who need and deliver DECAL services

Assure voices from across the state and from people in vulnerable circumstances are heard

Provide timely information DECAL could use to make programmatic and allocation decisions



More Than 7,000 Perspectives Gathered (October–November 2021)

- 2 online surveys
 - 6,597 people who work in or operate Georgia’s early care and learning programs
 - 416 people who work at DECAL
- 26 virtual focus groups
 - 83 Georgia residents who are guardians of children from birth through age 13
 - 23 people working in early learning programs

See appendix A of the report for detailed information.

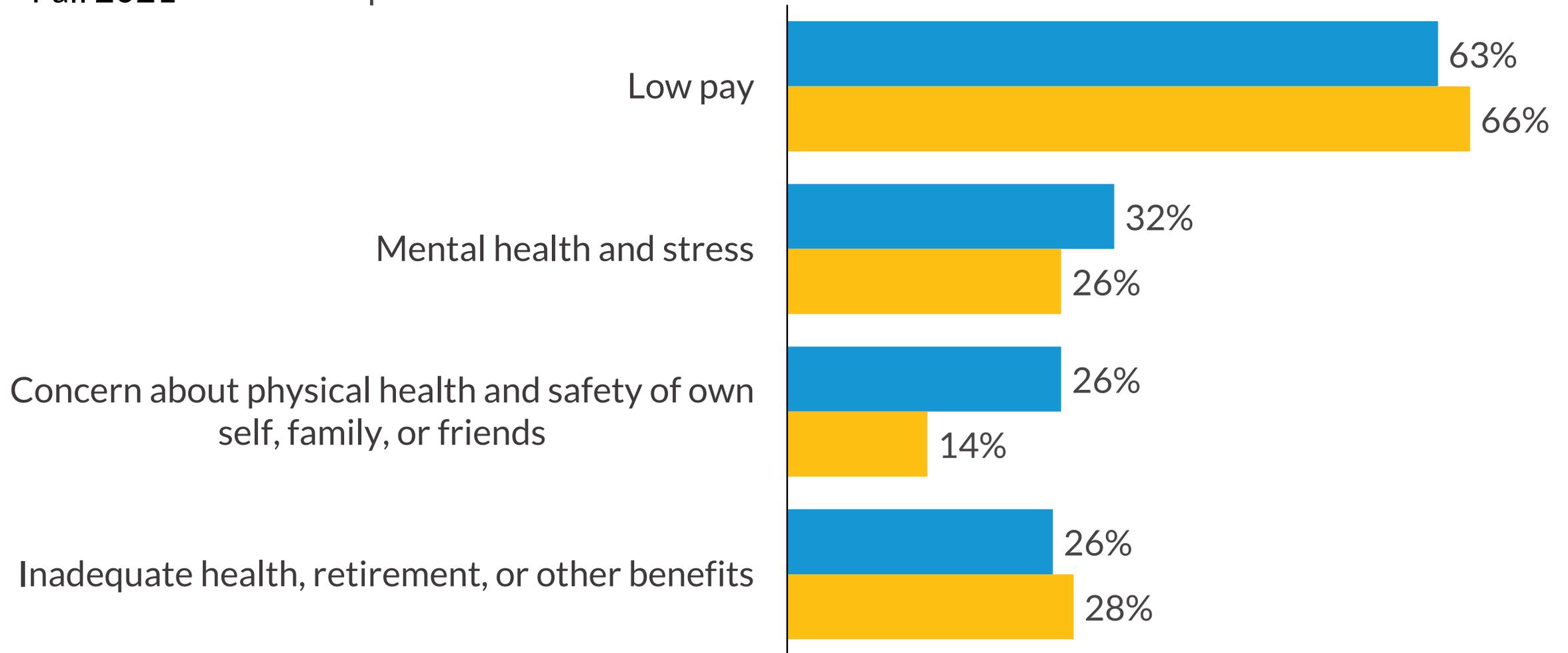
Urban Team's Approach to Developing the Nine Recommendations

Recommendations:

1. Provide support to encourage more people to become and remain early childhood educators.
2. Focus attention on and provide information about basic health and safety.
3. Reconsider group sizes and child-to-staff ratios.

Early Childhood Educators Most Often Reported Low Pay as a Challenge to Working in ECE

■ Fall 2021 ■ Before pandemic



Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying the issue as a top challenge, by time frame

1. Provide Support to Encourage More People to Become and Remain Early Childhood Educators

- Parents, early care and learning operators, and early childhood educators expressed concern about a staffing shortage and early educators leaving the field.
- Suggestions to encourage more people to become and remain early educators include the following:
 - Support strategies that will **improve educator pay**.
 - Help create **more career pipelines** that will assist child care programs with finding qualified staff members.
 - Help programs ensure **staff members are properly trained** to improve child safety.

2. Focus Attention on and Provide Information about Basic Health and Safety

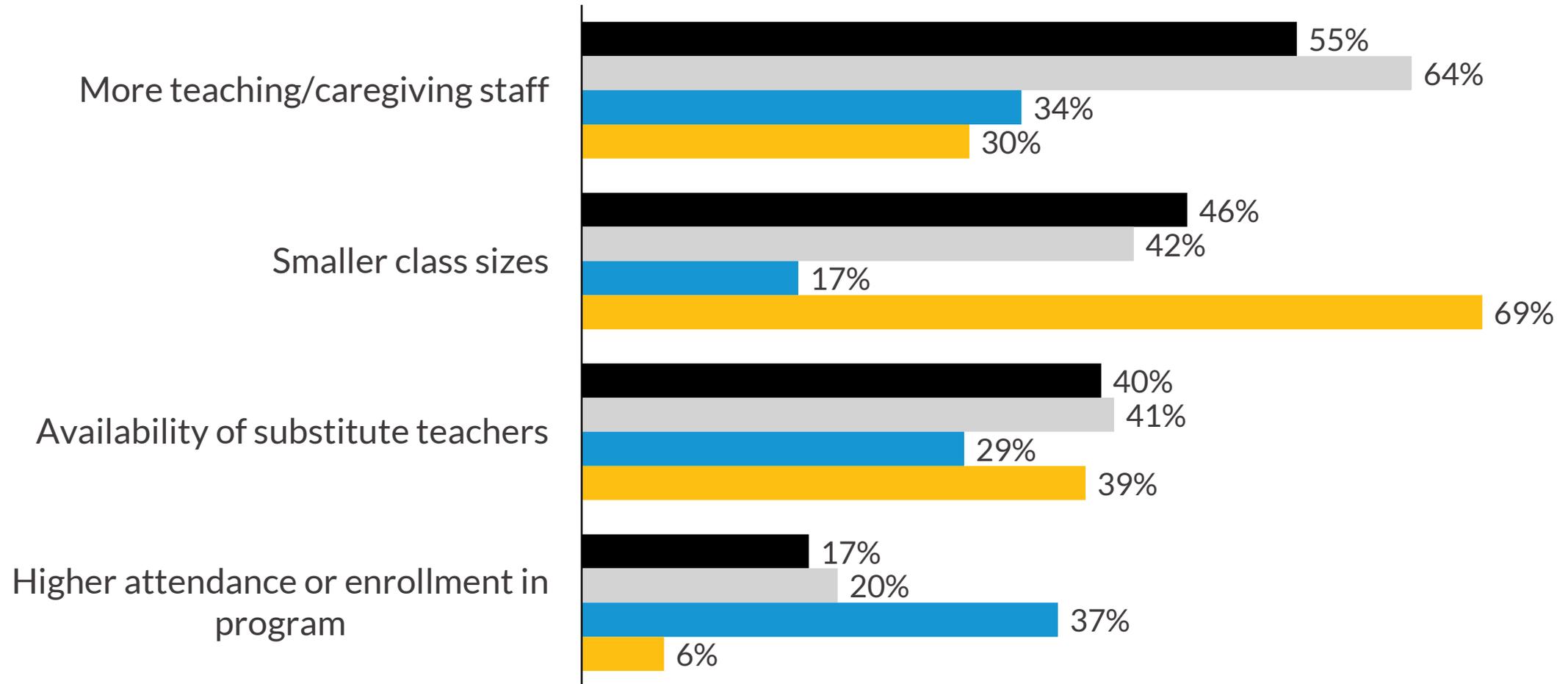
- Provide more information that is easier to find about child care provider inspections and violations.
- Provide funds for cameras that allow parents and supervisors to see what is going on.
- Do more *unannounced* DECAL visits.
- Provide a place that parents can call when their children are injured or disciplined inappropriately in a child care program.

3. Reconsider Group Sizes and Child-to-staff Ratios

- Parents expressed concern that their children were not always getting enough attention.
- Parents also expressed concerns for early childhood educators about the challenges and stress of caring for so many children.
- Center-based early childhood educators were more likely to express concerns than home-based educators about these issues than home-based early childhood educators.

Educators Most Often Cited Increased Staffing and Smaller Class Sizes as Helpful Operational Changes

■ Total ■ Center-based ■ Home-based ■ Pre-K



Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying change as an operational change or support that would help them remain in or return to the workforce

Recommendations:

4. Provide more accessible information to families about available early care and learning services.

5. Consider how to support more providers in offering care, providing longer hours, and participating in CAPS.

6. Support providers in taking care of social-emotional and behavioral needs.

4. Provide More Accessible Information to Families about Available Early Care and Learning Services

- Make information more accessible by providing information in places parents regularly visit.
- Reach out to expectant and new parents through OB-GYN doctor offices and hospital maternity wards.
- Improve DECAL's messaging.
- Improve information on existing DECAL-sponsored websites.

Parents Noted Challenges with Care Availability

“It’s not just nurses and doctors who have to work 12-hour shifts.”

“My son has been on the waitlist since he was born; he is one.”

5. Consider How to Support More Providers in Offering Care, Providing Longer Hours, and Participating in CAPS

- Incentivize providers to
 - stay open longer;
 - offer care on evenings, weekends, and holidays; and
 - transport children.
- Support providers to increase participation in CAPS, the child care subsidy program.

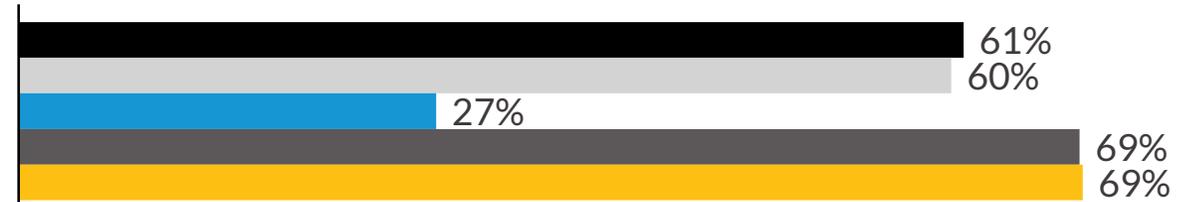
6. Support Providers in Taking Care of Social-emotional and Behavioral Needs

- Parents, early care and learning operators, and early childhood educators shared similar concerns
 - about how the pandemic had negatively impacted children,
 - that the children needed more support with social-emotional and behavioral needs, and
 - that early learning programs and educators needed more support to appropriately help the children.

Educators Cited Behavioral and Socioemotional Supports as Helpful Instructional/Classroom Resources

Total
 Center-based
 Home-based
 Pre-K in licensed center
 School-based Pre-K

Additional classroom support with managing challenging behaviors and supporting children's social and emotional development



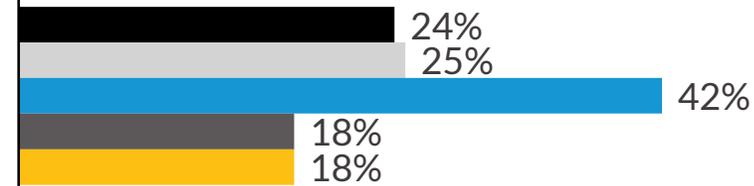
More classroom materials to support learning



Support keeping families engaged and communicating, including through technology



Access to quality curriculum and lesson planning resources



Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying support as a classroom support or resource that would help them remain in or return to and stay in the child care industry

Recommendations:

7. Consider new benchmarks for affordable care in Georgia and CAPS parent contributions.

8. Support CAPS program operations to increase responsiveness to parents.

7. Consider New Benchmarks for Affordable Care in Georgia and CAPS Parent Contributions

- Both parents who do and do not receive child care subsidy support from the CAPS program said it is hard to pay for child care, even before the pandemic.
- Everyone noted that costs in their lives were going up.

“If it weren’t for a \$500 per week daycare bill, maybe my wife could go back to her law enforcement job.”

—Georgia parent whose family does not receive a child care subsidy

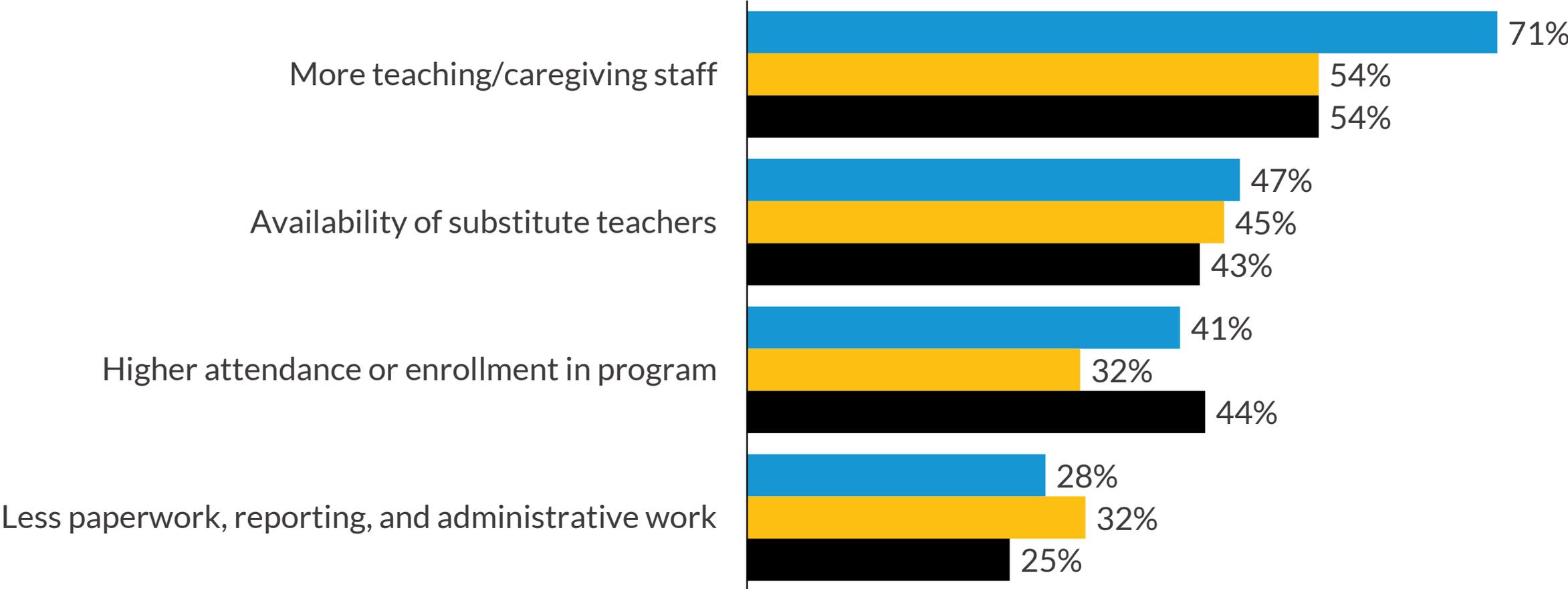
- Parents receiving CAPS said the program changes waiving parent tuition have been a “lifeline.”

8. Support CAPS Program Operations to Increase Responsiveness to Parents

- Parents and staff noted that the CAPS program was serving more people and providing higher levels of support, creating a strain in responding quickly.
- Parent suggestions to improve communication include the following:
 - Provide clearer information on the website.
 - Provide more information about why an application is denied.
 - Mail notices sooner.
 - Improve training for application reviewers.
 - Understand parent constraints during business day.

Early Learning Programs Participating in CAPS Cited the Need for Staffing Supports

■ CAPS program ■ Non-CAPS ■ Not CAPS eligible



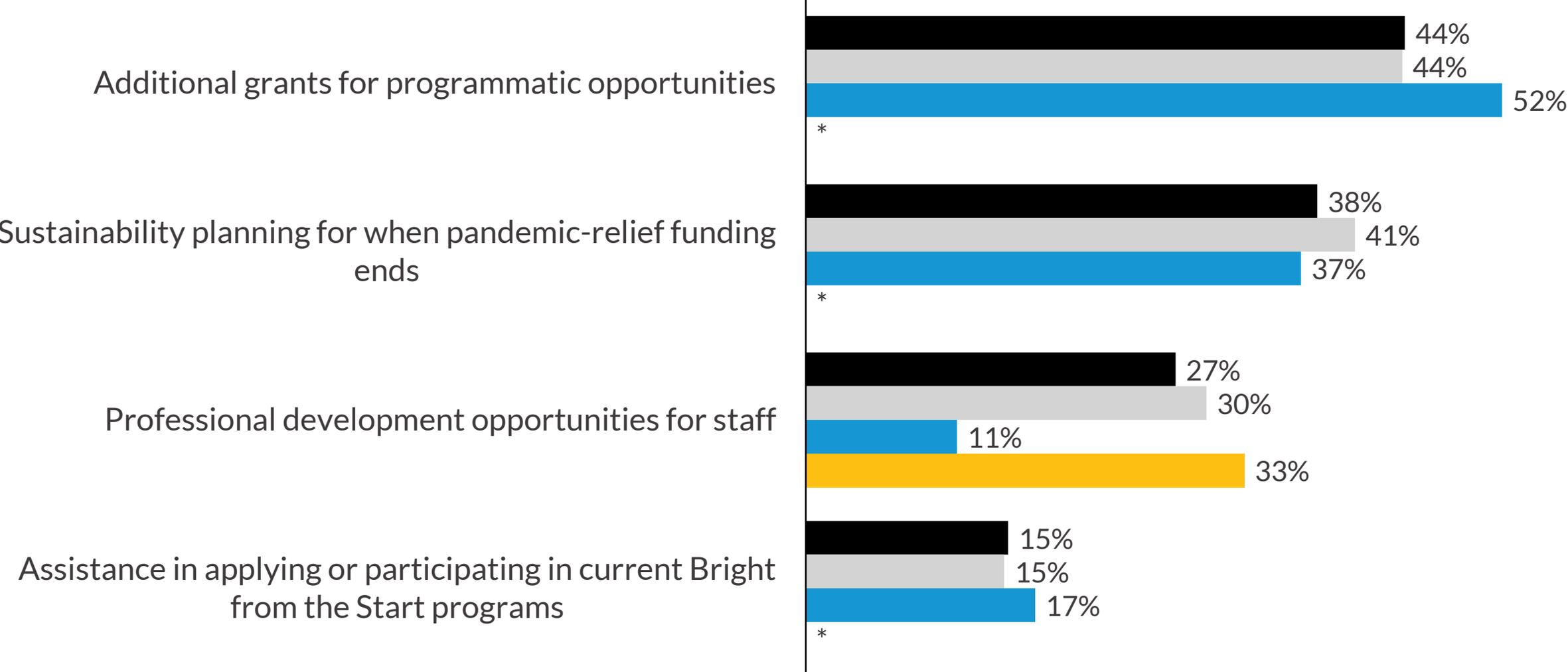
Share of ECE Workforce Survey program operator respondents identifying change as an operational change or support that would help them remain in or return to and stay in the child care industry

Recommendation:

9. Offer more grants and supports for financial sustainability and business planning.

Business Planning Among Top Needs

■ Total ■ Center-based ■ Home-based ■ Pre-K



* Suppressed due to small sample size.

Share of child care operators citing potential DECAL support as most helpful

New Initiatives with Federal COVID-19 Funding

Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner



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BRIGHT FROM THE START

Projects Supporting Child Care Providers

- Provider Rate Increase for ACCESS
 - Apply a 7.87% increase to CAPS providers' rates used to calculate the ACCESS payment.
- Health and Safety Grants
 - Award \$80 million in grants to CCLCs and FCCLHs to fund health and safety enhancements.
- Georgia's Pre-K Grants
 - Award \$5,000 one-time grants to Pre-K classrooms for technology, instructional materials, approved curricula, and classroom furniture.
- Quality Rated Restoration Grants
 - Award grants with classroom and staff funds to support providers as they prepare for on-site observations.
- Strengthening ECE Business Supports
 - Offer resources and training to providers to strengthen business practices, support sustainability after COVID-19 relief funding ends, and increase ability to offer high-quality early education services.



Projects Supporting ECE Workforce

- **School-Age Project**
 - Increase supports to programs offering school-age care through grants, training, and coaching opportunities.
- **ECE Task Force**
 - Convene a task force to support recruitment and retention of a skilled early care and education (ECE) workforce.
- **Workforce Entry**
 - Implement strategies to increase entry to the ECE workforce.
- **Strengthening the ECE Career Pipeline**
 - Develop supports for ECE professionals to continue their education and maintain employment in the ECE field.
- **POWER UP**
 - Provide financial assistance for teachers to attain higher credentials.



Projects Supporting ECE Workforce

- Mental Health Consultation Pilot
 - Create a cohort of infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) consultants and support up to five IECMH consultation contracts to expand community- and family-based mental health supports.
- Pyramid Model Training
 - Provide Pyramid Model training to the ECE workforce.
- OLLI Courses
 - Expand the Online Learning Library Initiative (OLLI) to include training curricula for specific audiences, including substitute teachers and new teachers.
- Teacher Supply Grants
 - Award \$125 grants to ECE professionals to purchase classroom and program supplies.



Projects Supporting Families

- Extending ACCESS
 - Extend ACCESS through September 2023.
- CAPS Student Parent 2Gen Pilot
 - Support student parents at three Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) campuses.



Projects Supporting Other Groups

- Business Partnership Grants
 - Award grants to 8–10 businesses that have staff who work nontraditional hours and need child care.
- Community Transformation Grants
 - Fund 10 new grants and offer extension grants to existing CTG grantees.
- CAPS Research Project
 - Study CAPS from the family perspective.
- System Level Evaluation
 - Evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 relief funding and what happens when the funding expires.



Questions and Answers

Thank you for attending!

- Report, executive summary, slides, and recording will be available tomorrow
 - Posted on Urban Institute and DECAL websites
 - All webinar registrants will receive an email with links
- If you have questions about this study, please email Teresa Derrick-Mills at tderrick-mills@urban.org.
- If you have any questions about any of the DECAL programs and services, please email bftsresearch@decalfga.gov. DECAL's Research and Policy Analysis team will answer or forward your question to the appropriate program.
- **Please take a moment to complete our poll before you leave!**