

HOUSE BILL NO. 360

INTRODUCED BY M. ROMANO, J. REAVIS, L. MUSZKIEWICZ, B. EDWARDS, J. ISALY, M. LEE, P. STRAND, J. SECKINGER, B. CLOSE, S. FYANT, J. WEBER, J. SOOKTIS, M. CUNNINGHAM, E. MATTHEWS, T. RUNNING WOLF, F. SMITH, D. BAUM, M. CAFERRO, B. CARTER, J. COHENOUR, D. HAWK, S. HOWELL, C. KEOGH, K. KORTUM, E. STAFMAN, K. SULLIVAN, M. THANE, P. TUSS, M. MARLER, S. DEMAROIS, J. LYNCH

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CHILD CARE WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SUPPORT PAYMENT PROGRAM; PROVIDING ELIGIBLE USES FOR WHICH THE SUPPORT PAYMENTS MAY BE SPENT; PROVIDING A METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, Montana's early childhood care and education industry provides a service essential to the robust engagement of the broader workforce of the state by making it possible for parents of young children to be employed; and

WHEREAS, persistent low wages in child-care jobs have significantly hampered recruitment and retention of the child-care workforce, impacting the sector's ability to provide reliable, safe, and sufficient care to Montana's communities; and

WHEREAS, raising prices for child care creates a cost burden on families that leads to parents leaving the workforce.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Child care workforce recruitment and retention support payment program -- purpose. (1) There is a child care workforce recruitment and retention support payment program administered by the department of public health and human services.

(2) The purpose of the program is to provide payments to eligible child-care facilities to use the

1 funds to strengthen the ability of providers to recruit and retain qualified child-care workers.

2

3 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Definitions. For the purposes of [sections 1 through 5], the following
4 definitions apply:

5 (1) "Child-care worker" means a person who is listed on the early childhood project workforce
6 registry who owns or is employed by an eligible licensed day-care center, registered group day-care home, or
7 registered family day-care home.

8 (2) "Eligible child-care facility" means a licensed day-care center, registered family day-care home,
9 or registered group day-care home.

10

11 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Eligible use of funds -- day-care centers and group day-care homes.

12 A licensed day-care center or a registered group day-care home that receives support payments pursuant to
13 [sections 1 through 5] may only spend the funds on personnel costs. A licensed day-care center or registered
14 group day-care home may spend the funds on the following eligible uses for the benefit of child-care workers
15 employed at the center:

- 16 (1) to supplement the wages paid;
- 17 (2) to offset the cost or pay directly for the benefits provided;
- 18 (3) to provide a signing bonus for a newly hired child-care worker; and
- 19 (4) to provide longevity bonuses to recognize employees who have remained with a single day-
20 care center or group day-care home.

21

22 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Eligible use of funds -- family day-care homes. A registered family
23 day-care home that receives support payments pursuant to [sections 1 through 5] may only spend the funds on
24 the following eligible uses:

- 25 (1) for the benefit of child-care workers employed at the family day-care home:
 - 26 (a) to supplement the wages paid;
 - 27 (b) to offset the cost or pay directly for the benefits provided;
 - 28 (c) to provide a signing bonus for a newly hired child-care worker; and

- 1 (d) to provide longevity bonuses to recognize employees who have remained with a single family
- 2 day-care home;
- 3 (2) facility costs of the family day-care home;
- 4 (3) equipment for the family day-care home;
- 5 (4) professional development for the child-care workers; or
- 6 (5) mental health support for the children in care at the family day-care home.

7

8 **NEW SECTION. Section 5. Distribution of funds.** (1) The department shall distribute the support

9 payments on a monthly basis to eligible child-care facilities in an amount proportional to the number of child-

10 care workers employed on a full-time or part-time basis.

11 (2) For the purposes of this section, a full-time employee is an employee who works 40 hours a

12 week.

13

14 **NEW SECTION. Section 6. Appropriation.** (1) The following money is appropriated from the general

15 fund to the department of public health and human services for the purposes of the child care workforce

16 recruitment and retention support payment program provided for in [sections 1 through 5]:

17	Fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025	\$59,900,000
18	Fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026	\$59,900,000

19 (2) The funds appropriated may only be spent for the eligible uses of funds as provided in

20 [sections 3 and 4].

21 (3) The legislature intends that the appropriation in this section be considered part of the ongoing

22 base for the next legislative session.

23

24 **NEW SECTION. Section 7. Codification instruction.** [Sections 1 through 5] are intended to be

25 codified as an integral part of Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, and the provisions of Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, apply

26 to [sections 1 through 5].

27

28 **NEW SECTION. Section 8. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2025.

1

- END -