



Smart Start & WAGE\$

The Child Care WAGE\$ Program provides education-based salary supplements to teachers, directors, and family child care educators working with children from birth to 5 years old. The program is designed to increase retention, education, and compensation.

WAGE\$ is a funding collaboration between Smart Start and the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). It is administered by Child Care Services Association. **Smart Start local partnerships fund more than \$7.6 million in WAGE\$ salary supplements.**¹



Current WAGE\$ Impact

- ✓ 57 counties covered¹
- ✓ 3,880 teachers receiving supplements²
- ✓ \$993 average supplement (paid every six months)²



More information is available at www.childcareservices.org/wages-nc

The Need

- In 2019, the median wage for child care workers was \$10.62.³
- In 2019, the media wage for preschool teachers was \$12.83.
- The poverty rate for early educators in North Carolina is 17.6%.
- One in five teachers has no health insurance, and 38% received public assistance in the prior three years.⁴
- Almost 30% of the workforce report that they do not expect to remain in the field for three years because of low wages and lack of benefits.

The Opportunity

Additional funding for WAGE\$ and Smart Start would expand the program statewide, increasing the reach and impact for child care professionals.

- Funding proposed in Governor Cooper's budget to expand WAGE\$ to all 100 counties through the Smart Start network: \$10M in recurring funding for FY 21-22 and \$26M in recurring funds for FY 22-23.
- Projected impact of statewide of statewide expansion: 16,640 teachers receiving education-based salary supplements (90% of those eligible)

¹2021 CCSA WAGE\$ Report to June 2021

²WAGE\$ Annual Report Summary 2020 final v2 (childcareservices.org)

³<https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/north-carolina/>

⁴The 2019 Early Care and Education Workforce in North Carolina, Child Care Services Association