

1 **Professional Development Scholarship Program for Early**  
2 **Childhood Professionals (Track 76013)**  
3 **Discussion Paper**

4 **Background**

5 The Texas Legislature directs the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to dedicate funds each  
6 year for programs that encourage early childhood professionals to participate in continuing  
7 professional development.<sup>1</sup> On October 6, 2017, TWC's three-member Commission  
8 (Commission) approved directing these funds to the Professional Development Scholarship  
9 Program for Early Childhood Professionals for the 2018–2019 biennium.

10 A two-year grant was awarded to the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children  
11 (TXAEYC) T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood®  
12 program to fund professional development scholarships through August 31, 2020. The program  
13 provides scholarships to eligible caregivers for attaining a Child Development Associate™  
14 (CDA) credential or an associate's degree in child development. Since 2011, the Texas  
15 T.E.A.C.H. program has awarded 1,634 CDA scholarships and 1,154 associate's degree  
16 scholarships to early childhood professionals employed in Texas child care programs.

17 In 2019, the 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, increased this investment from \$500,000  
18 to \$750,000 for each year beginning in the 2020–2021 biennium. On August 23, 2019, the  
19 Commission approved \$750,000 for Professional Development Scholarships in its approval of  
20 the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget. Additionally, the Child Care and Development Block  
21 Grant (CCDBG) requires that states expend at least 10 percent of total Child Care and  
22 Development Fund (CCDF) funds on activities designed to improve the quality of child care  
23 programs in the state. These professional development scholarships enhance the skills of the  
24 child care workforce, an activity that counts toward this federal requirement.

25 In addition to the federal and state legislative direction, many comments on Texas' Fiscal Year  
26 2019–2021 CCDF State Plan indicated stakeholders' desire to see greater support for educational  
27 pathways for early childhood professionals, including progressive educational and career  
28 advancement. Such professional development programs encourage early childhood professionals  
29 to develop along an educational continuum and include not only scholarships for education but  
30 also employer and participant commitments:

- 31 • Employers commit to provide incremental compensation increases tied to participants'  
32 educational attainment.  
33 • Participants commit to remain employed at a sponsoring early childhood program for a  
34 specified period relative to their educational attainment (for example: six months for a CDA,  
35 12 months for an associate's degree, and 18 months for a bachelor's degree).

36 **Issue 1: Procurement and Contracting for Professional Development Scholarships**

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<sup>1</sup> Rider 30, Article VII, General Appropriations Act (GAA), 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2013), Rider 29, Article VII, GAA, 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2015), Rider 29, Article VII, GAA, 85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2017), and Rider 27, Article VII, GAA, 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2019)

1 The contract with TXAEYC for the T.E.A.C.H. program is renewable for Fiscal Year 2020  
2 (FY'20) for \$500,000. However, TWC is not able to extend the existing contract with TXAEYC  
3 based on the increased state appropriations. With the 86th Texas Legislature's direction to  
4 increase funding, an additional \$250,000 must be competitively procured in FY'20, and a total of  
5 \$750,000 must be competitively procured in FY'21.

6 **Decision Point**

7 Staff seeks direction on conducting a competitive procurement process to award a grant for the  
8 additional \$250,000 in FY'20 and \$750,000 in FY'21. Staff also seeks direction on extending the  
9 contract for an additional two years (FY'22-'23), based on fund availability (including any  
10 potential increases in future year funds) and the awarded grantee's successful performance.

11 **Issue 2: Scholarships to Support Higher Education**

12 TXAEYC reports that 52 percent of T.E.A.C.H. scholarship applicants' education goal is to earn  
13 a bachelor's degree, and there currently is a waiting list of 96 eligible applicants who are seeking  
14 scholarships to further their progress toward earning a bachelor's degree. To be eligible,  
15 applicants must have an associate's degree or at least 60 hours of transferrable credit toward a  
16 bachelor's degree.

17 TWC funds for the Professional Development Scholarship Program for Early Childhood  
18 Professionals are currently limited to scholarships for CDAs and associate's degrees. Including  
19 bachelor's degree scholarships would help meet the need for more stackable credentials and  
20 advanced career pathways for early childhood professionals.

21 **Decision Point**

22 Staff seeks direction on expanding the categories of professional development scholarships that  
23 may be awarded to include scholarships for bachelor's degrees, and on including the nationally  
24 standard requirements for employment retention—that is, requiring scholarship recipients to  
25 commit to remain employed with their current programs for an additional 18 months.

26 **Issue 3: Use of Additional Child Care Funds to Support Child Care Apprenticeship**

27 In addition to traditional educational scholarships, early childhood educators may benefit from  
28 apprenticeship models. A registered apprenticeship program would allow students to pair  
29 classroom training with on-the-job experience and to incrementally increase their credentials and  
30 income.

31 **Decision Point**

32 Staff seeks direction on expanding the categories of professional development scholarships that  
33 may be awarded by adding scholarships for registered apprenticeship programs.