

1 \_\_\_\_\_ BILL NO. \_\_\_\_\_

2 INTRODUCED BY \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (2) The purpose of the program is to provide payments to eligible child-care facilities to use the  
25 funds to strengthen the ability of providers to recruit and retain qualified child-care workers.

26  
27 NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Definitions.** For the purposes of [sections 1 through 5], the following  
28 definitions apply:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) for the benefit of child-care workers employed at the family day-care home:
  - (a) to supplement the wages paid;
  - (b) to offset the cost or pay directly for the benefits provided;
  - (c) to provide a signing bonus for a newly hired child-care worker; and
  - (d) to provide longevity bonuses to recognize employees who have remained with a single family day-care home;
- (2) facility costs of the family day-care home;
- (3) equipment for the family day-care home;

1           (4)     professional development for the child-care workers; or

2           (5)     mental health support for the children in care at the family day-care home.

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4           NEW SECTION. Section 5. Distribution of funds. (1) The department shall distribute the support  
5     payments on a monthly basis to eligible child-care facilities in an amount proportional to the number of child-  
6     care workers employed on a full-time or part-time basis.

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

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10          NEW SECTION. Section 6. Appropriation. (1) The following money is appropriated from the general  
11     fund to the department of public health and human services for the purposes of the child care workforce  
12     recruitment and retention support payment program provided for in [sections 1 through 5]:

13           Fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025         \$59,900,000

14           Fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026         \$59,900,000

15           (2)     The funds appropriated may only be spent for the eligible uses of funds as provided in  
16     [sections 3 and 4].

17           (3)     The legislature intends that the appropriation in this section be considered part of the ongoing  
18     base for the next legislative session.

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20          NEW SECTION. Section 7. Codification instruction. [Sections 1 through 5] are intended to be  
21     codified as an integral part of Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, and the provisions of Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, apply  
22     to [sections 1 through 5].

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

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