



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gov. Lujan Grisham announces historic expansion of PreK programs in New Mexico**

*Funding includes more than 550 new PreK slots for tribes, nations and pueblos*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham announced at the White House today the largest-ever expansion of PreK programs in New Mexico that will increase the number of students served by more than 3,000, a huge leap forward in the governor’s mission of creating a comprehensive educational system from cradle to career.

The governor made the announcement at the White House States Convening on Child Care alongside First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, which brought together nearly 100 state legislators from around the country and highlighted New Mexico’s leadership in creating a nationally leading early childhood care and education system.

Using nearly \$100 million from the Land Grant Permanent Fund requested by the governor and appropriated by the state Legislature during the 2023 session, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) awarded a total of 279 PreK grants to 84 school district programs and 195 community-based programs, family child care providers, Tribal governments, and Head Start grantees. The funding will also be used to significantly expand instructional hours and increase pay for PreK teachers in the awarded programs.

"When I entered office, early childhood education and care programs were scattered throughout three state agencies, making it difficult to navigate for families and nearly impossible to create meaningful improvements in how we serve our youngest learners," said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. "We needed a stronger family-centered, high-quality, universal early care and education system – and we are delivering. Today is a major step in securing universal PreK access for four-year-olds and a huge leap in access for three-year-olds in our state. Today, we are leading the nation in creating lasting, generational opportunities for New Mexico families and young children."

The governor also emphasized the economic benefits inherent in investing in early childhood care and education:

“We often talk about early childhood education as a long-term investment; a vital expense on the front end that will pay off down the road – when kids grow up well-prepared to join the workforce and succeed. It is that – but that’s not all it is. Because improving access to early education and care also creates benefits right now – for parents who can go to work, support their families and contribute to their community. For entrepreneurs who can invest in innovation and job growth. For businesses that can attract new workers and put down new roots. When we ignore these opportunities, we diminish our economic potential – but when we embrace them, we can transform our future.”

The nearly \$100 million investment is also:

- Improving compensation for all PreK teachers through an enhanced per-child rate for New Mexico PreK to a \$50,000 starting wage;
- Increasing instructional hours for more than 16,000 students aged 3 and 4,
- Funding 554 new Tribal PreK slots across the Navajo Nation, To’Hajiilee Chapter of the Navajo Nation, and for the first time using state-supported PreK, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, and Pueblo of Nambe. Funding is planned for The Pueblo of Tesuque this year.

“Ninety percent of a child’s brain develops in their first five years of life,” said **ECECD Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky**. “Improving access to New Mexico PreK, a high-quality, voluntary, and free program, for thousands of three- and four-year-olds across our state will ensure positive health, developmental, and educational outcomes for our youngest residents.”

Since 2019, the Lujan Grisham administration has:

- Created near-universal access to PreK for four-year-olds,
- Made great strides to working toward universal access for three-year-olds and,
- Extended the hours and days of instruction coupled with increased wages for PreK educators and,
- Increased PreK access by 30 percent for 4-year-olds living in the Albuquerque School District, 67 percent for 4-year-olds living in the Hobbs school district, and 25 percent for 4-year-olds living in Farmington School District.

Additional interview opportunities are available. Please contact ECECD Communications Manager Sonya Martinez at [Sonya.Martinez@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:Sonya.Martinez@ececd.nm.gov) for details. The governor’s remarks are available on [The White House YouTube page](#).

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