

April 1, 2022

**Bold on Early Educator Compensation Learning Community**  
**Session # 5: Benefits (Health insurance, spotlight on NM and WA)**

**Overview:**

During the session, Rep. Senn from Washington and Matthew Henderson from OLE, New Mexico shared about initiatives to increase access to health insurance in their states - followed by breakout room discussion on increasing access to health benefits in states and the use/presence of unions to win access to benefits.

We learned that during COVID, Washington directed \$30 million to monthly premium assistance to child care providers and directed educators to the state healthcare exchange, boosting enrollment through multilingual navigators and partnering with community-based organizations to reach educators.

A coalition in New Mexico fought for the Health Care Affordability Act which created a fund to make healthcare affordable by replacing federal tax on healthcare benefits with a state tax that directed that money into a state fund (this generated \$200 million in the first year). There was disagreement amongst the coalition about the intended use for the funds; originally the fund was intended to cover undocumented immigrants who couldn't access medicaid through existing structures however this was not in the final act.

**Hooray moments:** Participants from Wisconsin shared about the [Partner Up Initiative](#) in which the state uses ARP funds to cover 75% of the cost for a business to offer child care coverage to their employees (note that child care providers can count as eligible businesses).

**Take-Aways:**

Before the session, participants filled out a survey on what their state has done to increase access to benefits, who was involved, challenges and successes.

- 9 respondents (two thirds said their state had not done anything related to benefits, one third said they had (NC, NM, WA))
- Challenges:
  - Finding funds
  - Building political will to keep funds sustained
  - Some programs already have benefits
  - Outreach/communications for enrollment
- During discussion, other states shared examples of healthcare coverage being provided through:
  - Unions/collective bargaining for FCC (e.g. SEIU, AFT in NM and WA)
  - Dedicated state revenue for premiums or other kinds of healthcare coverage
  - PEOs