

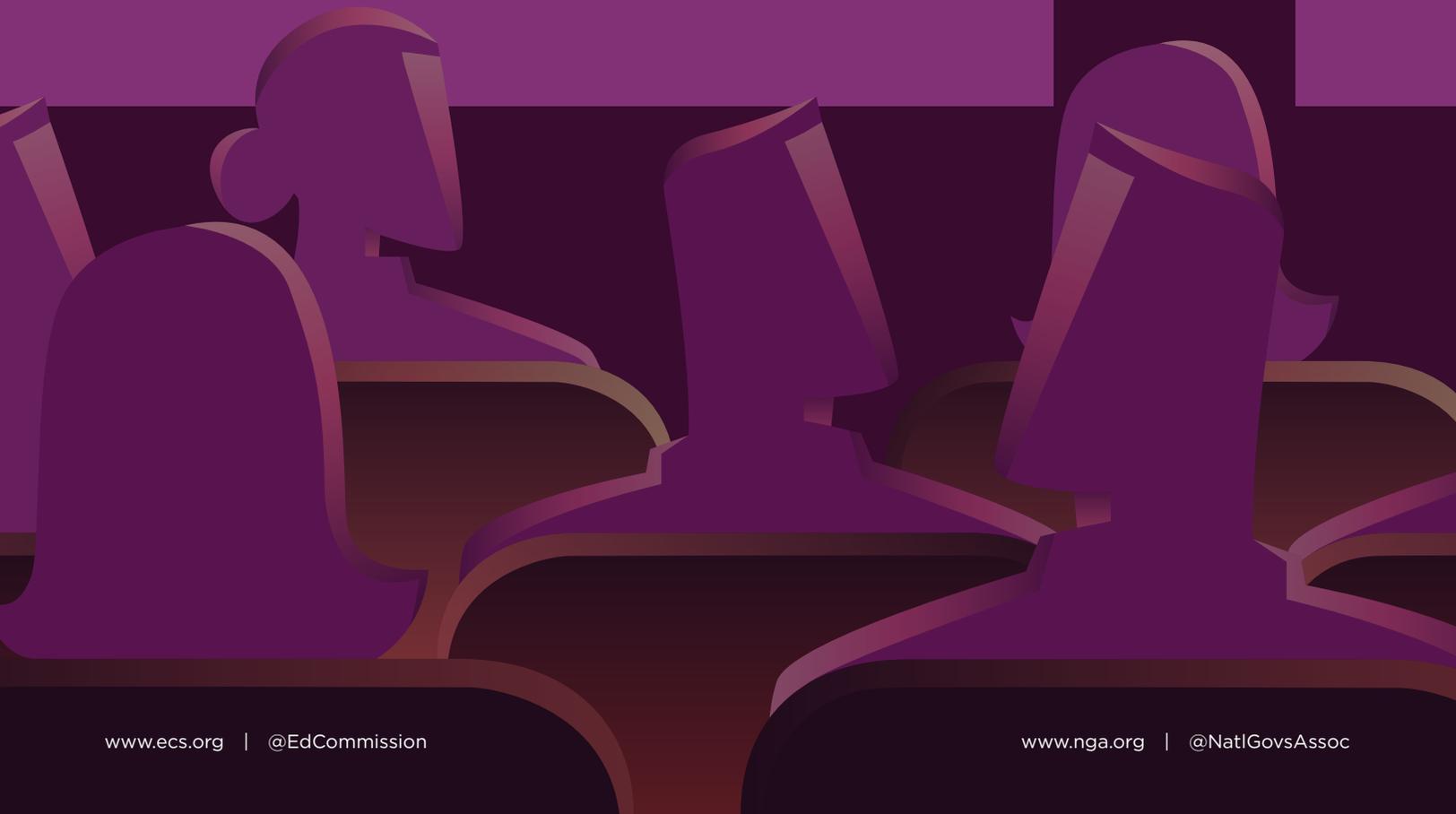
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# GOVERNORS' TOP EDUCATION PRIORITIES

in 2022 State of the State Addresses

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Cassidy Francies and Zeke Perez Jr.



In highlighting achievements and noting their goals for the coming year, governors continued to recognize the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on education in their 2022 State of the State addresses. At least 27 governors discussed reopening schools, often stressing the importance of in-person learning for students. Additionally, at least 15 governors mentioned education implications of federal pandemic relief funds. With responses to the pandemic serving as a backdrop, approaches to education policy challenges across the P-20 spectrum were highlighted. Governors frequently noted the importance of a strong education system in their addresses as well. As Gov. Phil Murphy of **New Jersey** emphasized in his address, “Strong public schools make communities more attractive for families looking to move to New Jersey ... Few public investments will protect the value of your home more than strong and properly funded schools.”

For more than 15 years, Education Commission of the States has identified trends in education policy accomplishments and proposals featured in Governors’ State of the State addresses, reviewing addresses given in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. For the past three years, ECS has also partnered with the National Governors Association to review education proposals in these addresses. To date, 44 governors have delivered their 2022 State of the State address, and these are the top six trends across states:



**There’s no question we can make education better and better... all the time.”**

**Gov. Jim Justice, West Virginia**



At least 36 governors discussed **K-12 FUNDING**, highlighting specific programs, funding for specific student groups and education funding in general. Governors also discussed the use of federal funds to support education.



Governors in at least 33 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands emphasized the importance of **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** and career and technical education policies in their states, including how these policies relate to economic development.



**TEACHER STAFFING** was mentioned by at least 22 governors, including strategies for teacher recruitment and retention, and the need for better teacher compensation. Some governors included specific proposals, while others lauded educators for their work.



At least 19 governors highlighted **PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH** in education, noting the impact of the pandemic on students’ mental and behavioral health, and highlighting continued state efforts to keep students and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Governors in at least 18 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands addressed **POSTSECONDARY AFFORDABILITY**, often addressing adjustments to tuition and increases in financial aid.



**LEARNING RECOVERY** and success was addressed by at least 17 governors, with some looking at academic performance more broadly and others considering specific efforts to address interrupted instruction and accelerate student learning.



# K-12 FUNDING

As in [previous years](#), many governors emphasized the role of funding in K-12 education. At least **36 governors** mentioned funding, with many addressing cuts to funding as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and some proposing increases to education funding. This year, some governors also emphasized using federal pandemic relief funds for education.

## Highlights



### Arkansas

Gov. Asa Hutchinson

Noted education funding increases made by his administration and proposed a funding increase for education.



### Georgia

Gov. Brian Kemp

Proposed increasing funding for education by \$425 million in the 2023 budget to fully fund schools and to remove austerity cuts from the pandemic.



### Illinois

Gov. J.B. Pritzker

Proposed a \$350 million increase for the K-12 Evidence Based Funding Formula.



### Maryland

Gov. Larry Hogan

Celebrated eight years of record investments in education.



### New Jersey

Gov. Phil Murphy

Highlighted increased investments in education from pre-K through graduation, including support for students and educators in the classroom, and construction aid to build and renovate schools.



### Washington

Gov. Jay Inslee

Proposed reinvesting \$900 million to help schools address students' critical needs.



That's why I am proposing more than \$970 million in education funding with a priority focus on at-risk and disadvantaged students. A child's zip code should never determine their future or their opportunities."

Gov. Spencer Cox, Utah



To learn more about state policy action in this area, see ECS' [Funding](#) Key Issue page. Please also see NGA's [State Funding Profiles](#).



# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CTE

At least **34 governors** emphasized workforce development and career and technical education, recognizing the importance of education in preparing students for current and future workforce needs. Some governors proposed additional funding for workforce training programs or career and technical education. Others highlighted successes in their workforce systems, such as apprenticeships.

## Highlights



### Delaware

Gov. John Carney

Noted state investment of more than \$50 million in federal stimulus funds to strengthen workforce training programs.



### Mississippi

Gov. Tate Reeves

Proposed investing \$130 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support workforce development through the [Accelerate Mississippi](#) program.



### Missouri

Gov. Mike Parson

Proposed investing \$20 million in grant funding for 57 area career centers to expand career and technical education programs.



### Nebraska

Gov. Pete Ricketts

Shared how ARPA funds will help provide Nebraska's community colleges with dollars to enhance their workforce development programs.



### Oregon

Gov. Kate Brown

Called for a surge of \$92 million in current [Future Ready Oregon](#) programs, flexible grants to community-based organizations, and additional supports to people in job training programs.



### Pennsylvania

Gov. Tom Wolf

Called for increasing investments in job training programs.



[This year's budget] will make historic investments in education, as world-class companies require a world-class workforce."

Gov. Andy Beshear,  
Kentucky



To learn more about state policy action in this area, see ECS' [Workforce Development](#) Key Issue page. Please also see NGA's [Leveraging Registered Apprenticeship report](#) and [Chairman's Initiative page](#).



# TEACHER STAFFING

Teacher staffing issues continued to be a top priority for governors, especially as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school staffing shortages becomes clear. At least **22 governors** talked about teacher recruitment and retention or teacher compensation. Governors spoke about innovative pathways to recruit and retain a highly qualified teacher workforce, as well as increased compensation and investment in existing pathways to strengthen the teacher pipeline.

## Highlights

 <b>Indiana</b> Gov. Eric Holcomb	Committed to strengthening the teacher pipeline to recruit and retain more teachers with a focus on teacher diversity and high-need subject areas through the establishment of a teacher marketplace that connects individuals with school openings in real time.
 <b>Michigan</b> Gov. Gretchen Whitmer	Recognized the efforts of teachers and emphasized continued investments in recruitment and retention.
 <b>New Mexico</b> Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham	Proposed a pay increase of at least 7% for every educator in the state, which would make the state first in the region for average educator pay.
 <b>New York</b> Gov. Kathy Hochul	Proposed increased efforts to recruit and retain teachers with more effective training and support, faster and easier certification, and stronger career pipelines and ladders.
 <b>Oklahoma</b> Gov. Kevin Stitt	Proposed matching funds so that the state's best teachers can make six figures and stay in the classroom, rather than leave classroom environments to become administrators.
 <b>Virginia</b> Gov. Glenn Youngkin	Emphasized the need to pay teachers to attract quality professionals to schools.



Talk to someone who's been successful and without fail they'll tell you about a teacher who set them on their path. About someone who inspired them; who pushed them to be who they are today. Our teachers provide more than textbook instruction. They give emotional support and structure. They help guide our children through their most difficult and formative years."

Gov. Kim Reynolds, Iowa



To learn more about state policy action in this area, see ECS' [Teaching Profession](#) Key Issue page. Please also see NGA's [School Leadership Hot Topics Series](#).



# PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Governors continue to prioritize health and wellness in education, with at least **19 governors** mentioning the topic. Most governors discussing health focused on the impact of the pandemic on student and staff physical and mental health. Several addressed the provision of increased health and mental health services, professionals and resources in schools and postsecondary campuses.

## Highlights



### Colorado

Gov. Jared Polis

Highlighted health supplies that have been distributed for free to students and school staff, including testing supplies and over 2 million free, medical-grade masks.



### Idaho

Gov. Brad Little

Praised the establishment of the [Behavioral Health Council](#), which has increased access to services in schools.



### Massachusetts

Gov. Charlie Baker

Shared that the state's partnership between K-12 schools, colleges, universities and child-care providers worked to create a COVID-19 testing program to keep kids and adults safe.



### Michigan

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer

Highlighted increased investments in mental health to help schools hire more than 560 nurses, counselors and social workers.



### New Hampshire

Gov. Chris Sununu

Proposed legislation requiring student identification cards to feature information on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.



### Wisconsin

Gov. Tony Evers

Announced the [Get Kids Ahead Initiative](#), with \$15 million for additional mental health services in schools.



We must also recognize that a mental health crisis exists in South Carolina, especially among our young people who have weathered two years of disruptions, virtual instruction, isolation and constant changes to normal routines. This crisis is here, right now. Students must have access to professional mental health counseling and services.”

Gov. Henry McMaster,  
South Carolina



To learn more about state policy action in this area, see ECS' [Student Health and Wellness](#) Key Issue page. Please also see NGA's [Student and School Staff Wellbeing Project](#).



# POSTSECONDARY AFFORDABILITY

Postsecondary affordability, including increased financial aid and adjustments to tuition, was a focus for at least **19 governors**. Some governors focused on state efforts to increase access and affordability for certain student populations, including students with disabilities, students connected to the military and students entering specific fields. Other governors discussed broader efforts to address tuition levels and costs systemwide or statewide.

## Highlights



**Connecticut**  
Gov. Ned Lamont

Noted the expansion of a tax credit for small businesses that helps repay their employees' student loans.



**Florida**  
Gov. Ron DeSantis

Opposed any tuition increases at the state's colleges and universities and opposed cutting [Bright Futures](#) scholarships.



**Maine**  
Gov. Janet Mills

Proposed making two years of community college free for the high school classes of 2020 through 2023 and for any student in their second year at a community college.



**Rhode Island**  
Gov. Dan McKee

Proposed dedicating more funding to forgive student loan debt, especially for health care professionals.



**South Dakota**  
Gov. Kristi Noem

Celebrated the implementation of the [Freedom Scholarship](#), a needs-based financial aid program for qualified South Dakota students to attend an eligible postsecondary institution in the state.



**Tennessee**  
Gov. Bill Lee

Proposed increased levels of higher education funding to prevent tuition increases for the state's public universities.



I'm also proposing stronger support for our state's institutions of higher education, including an expansion of available financial aid, and investments to help reduce costs and keep tuition flat."

Gov. Jared Polis, Colorado



To learn more about state policy action in this area, see ECS' [Postsecondary Affordability](#) Key Issue page. Please also see NGA's [Postsecondary Education](#) page.



# LEARNING RECOVERY AND SUCCESS

At least **17 governors** highlighted achievements and noted challenges related to student academic performance. Governors discussed interrupted instruction and student achievement as a common thread through other education policy issues. Governors discussed investments in efforts to return student proficiency in various subjects to pre-pandemic levels. Some states discussed out-of-school opportunities, including after-school programs and summer camps.

## Highlights



### Alabama

Gov. Kay Ivey

Proposed funding for after-school programs to help students get back on track. Also mentioned the importance of reading on grade level by grade three.



### Alaska

Gov. Mike Dunleavy

Highlighted the importance of ensuring students hit benchmark skills in reading and math.



### Arizona

Gov. Doug Ducey

Announced the launch of the [Back on Track Summer Camp](#) focused on catching up student learning with an emphasis on math, reading and American civics.



### Kansas

Gov. Laura Kelly

Announced the allocation of \$50 million in learning recovery grants to provide families with funding for counseling, tutoring, summer camps or other efforts to address unfinished learning.



### Nevada

Gov. Steve Sisolak

Discussed investment of \$200 million to help students recover academically in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic through summer schooling, tutoring and other efforts.



### U.S. Virgin Islands

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr.

Allocated \$1.5 million to community foundations working with students after school, on weekends and during the summer to improve numeracy and literacy.



Using the federal Governors' Emergency Education Relief fund, we're also empowering schools and teachers to innovate and create projects to recover learning lost due to the pandemic."

Gov. David Ige, Hawaii



To learn more about state policy activity in this area, see ECS' Policy Report on [Interrupted Instruction](#). Please also see NGA's [Reflect and Redesign series](#) and [State Education Leadership spotlights](#).



# About the Authors

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As a policy researcher, Cassidy supports the Policy Team by tracking legislation and responding to information requests on a variety of education policy issues. Prior to joining Education Commission of the States, Cassidy completed her bachelor's degree in political science and psychology at the University of Colorado Boulder. Cassidy is passionate about providing state leaders with quality information to support them in improving education systems for all students. Contact Cassidy at [cfrancies@ecs.org](mailto:cfrancies@ecs.org).

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## ABOUT NGA



Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association is the voice of the nation's governors and one of the most respected public policy organizations in the country. The association's members are the governors of the 55 states, territories and commonwealths. Members come to the association from across the political spectrum, but NGA itself is boldly nonpartisan.

