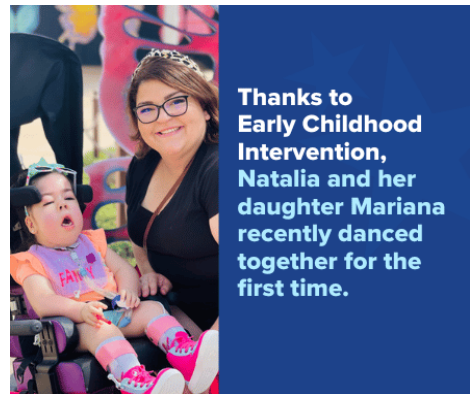


Prioritize Early Childhood Intervention Funding in Final State Budget Decisions

Budget conferees should support funding levels for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) and Rider 147 in the House budget bill to ensure infants and toddlers with disabilities continue to have access to life-changing therapies.

Texas ECI is highly effective for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

- ECI is a federal-state program that contracts with local community organizations, such as Any Baby Can and Easter Seals.
- ECI providers offer life-changing therapies and services to children under age 3 with autism, Down syndrome, and other disabilities and developmental delays during the first critical three years of life.
- ECI is highly effective in helping children learn how to walk, get ready to start school, and meet developmental milestones.



State ECI funding per child has decreased for the last decade. ECI providers across Texas are asked to serve more kids with less funding.

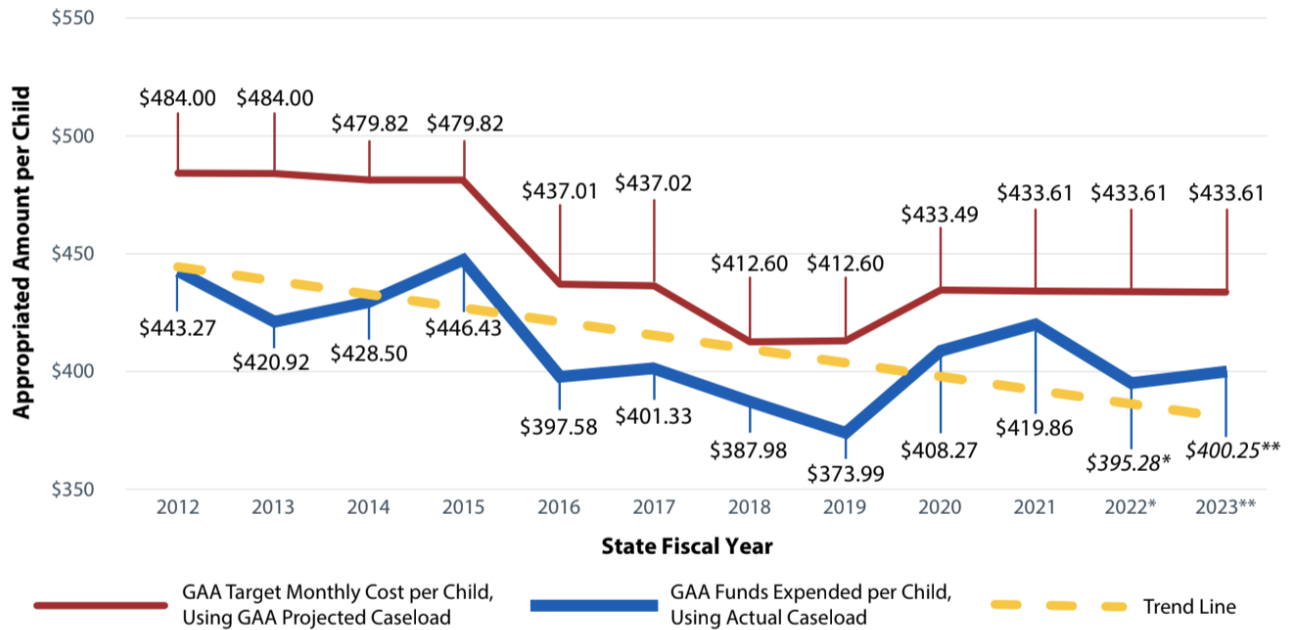
- For more than a decade, the number of children served by ECI has exceeded the Legislature's budgeted projections, resulting in funding per child below budgeted targets. In other words, the actual per-child funding that ECI providers receive is significantly lower than target per-child funding in the state budget.
- One reason for this discrepancy is the state continues to underestimate future ECI enrollment in its projections. While the Legislature funded ECI at \$434 per child last legislative session, the **actual** funding per child was only \$395 because of the growing number of children served by ECI. (see graph below).
- Chronic **underfunding** and consistent **underestimation** of future enrollment in ECI programs have exacerbated staff shortages and reduced outreach efforts, resulting in kids in ECI getting fewer services.

Support ECI funding levels and HHSC Rider 147 in the House budget bill.

- Lawmakers have shown their desire to prioritize ECI by adopting HHSC's Exceptional Item request in the House and Senate versions of the budget. While this is a great step, this \$433 per child is still drastically lower than per-child funding from 2011 (\$504) – even without taking into account inflation or present-day dollars. (See graph below.)
- **We urge conferees to adopt ECI funding levels in the House budget bill, which provide an additional \$6.2 million (\$192.6 million in FY 2024 and \$199.3 million in FY 2025)** that is urgently needed to correct years of underfunding, account for the growing number of children served by ECI, and help address the rising cost of providing ECI services, such as transportation and staff.
- **We also urge conferees to adopt House HHSC Rider 147, which requires HHSC to issue ECI enrollment and forecasting reports** to more accurately track ECI enrollment growth and avoid future underestimates and underfunding.

The Actual Funding Per-Child that ECI Providers Receive to Serve Kids is Consistently Lower than the Target Per-Child Funding Allocated by the State.

Appropriated Amount per Child — GAA Target vs. Actual



Graph provided by Texas HHSC. The 2010 GAA Target Monthly Cost per Child was \$504, which was removed to allow a decade comparison. *Fiscal year 2022 actual figures are based on incomplete data as of November 2022 and are subject to change as additional data is received. **Fiscal year 2023 actual figures are the current official June 2022 forecast.

Source: Texas Health and Human Services Commission (December 2022) ECI Funding Per Child.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5728d34462cd94b84dc567ed/t/63d296c3330a931ec4678f61/1674745577294/HHSC-ECI-Funding-Per-Child-December-12-2022>.