Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Early Education and Care

EEC Advisory Council
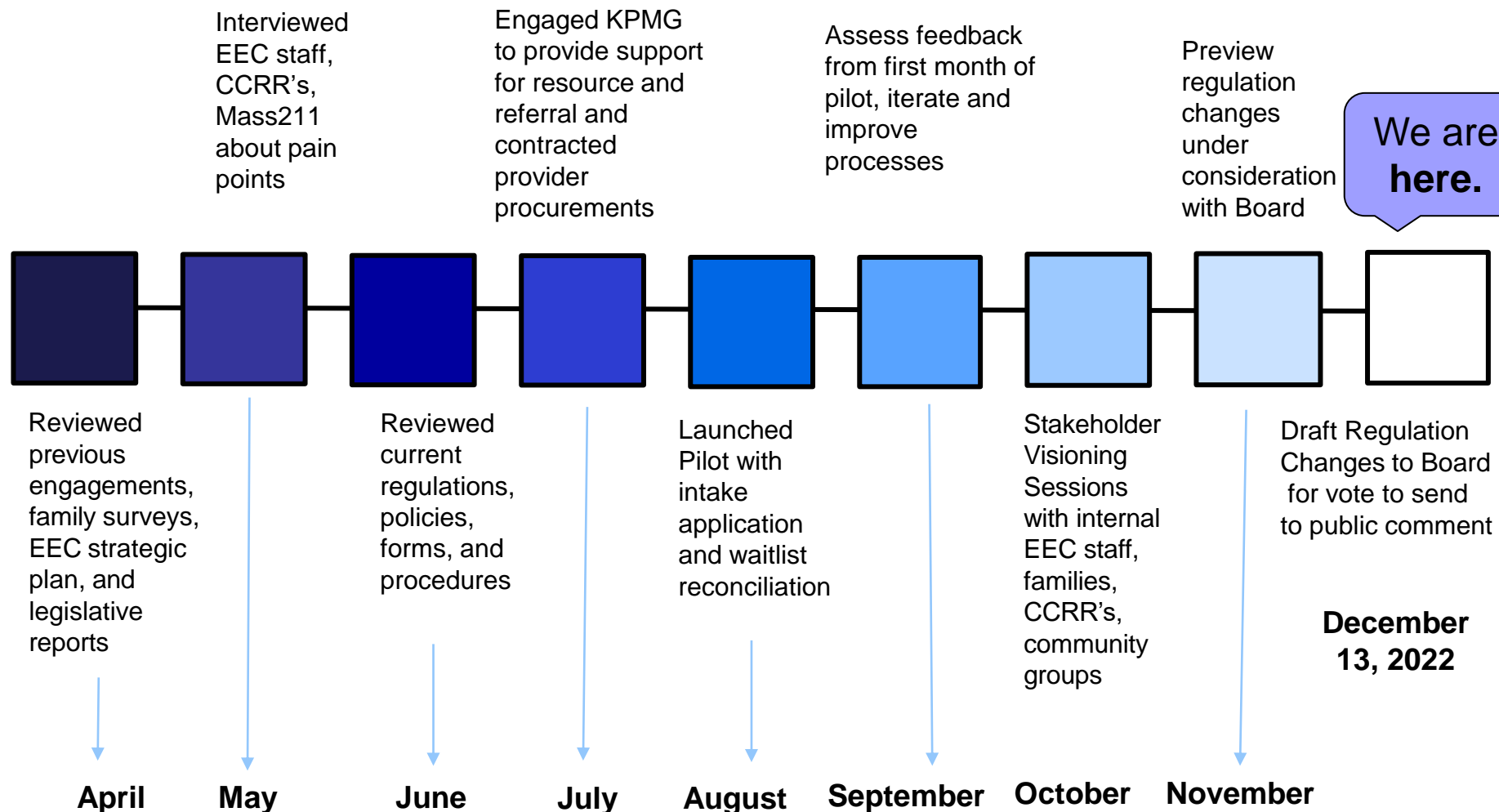
December 8, 2022

Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions & Agency Updates
2. Items for Discussion and Feedback
   - Child Care Financial Assistance Regulatory Reforms
   - Providing Access to Child Care Financial Assistance for Early Education and Care Staff

Child Care Financial Assistance Regulatory Reforms

Timeline to Regulation Revision Proposal, April 2022 to Present

Information Gathering. Stakeholder Interviews & Reviewing Existing Materials

Interviewed EEC staff, CCRR's, Mass211 about pain points

Engaged KPMG to provide support for resource and referral and contracted provider procurements

Assess feedback from first month of pilot, iterate and improve processes

Preview regulation changes under consideration with Board

We are **here.**

Reviewed previous engagements, family surveys, EEC strategic plan, and legislative reports

Reviewed current regulations, policies, forms, and procedures

Launched Pilot with intake application and waitlist reconciliation

Stakeholder Visioning Sessions with internal EEC staff, families, CCRR's, community groups

Draft Regulation Changes to Board for vote to send to public comment

December 13, 2022

April **May** **June** **July** **August** **September** **October** **November**

Guiding Principles for Improving Financial Assistance for Child Care

Family-Centered: Reorient the financial assistance for child care system to prioritize the experience and needs of Massachusetts families

Accessible & Equitable: Promote expanded and equitable access to child care promoting inclusive practices and communication

Simplified: Reduce the bureaucratic burden on families and subsidy administrators through increased flexibility and simplification of processes

Innovative: Introduce evidence-based, proven solutions and technology to improve overall system efficiency

Align Eligibility Requirements and Processes: Align across agency, state, and federal systems to create consistent processes

Collaborative: Work in tandem with internal and external partners to make improvements

Key Metrics for Child Care Financial Assistance Reforms

Increase…

- The number of children in families receiving child care financial assistance, including:
  - Low-income families (income-eligible)
  - Infants and toddlers
  - Families receiving SNAP and/or TAFDC through DTA
  - Supportive Child Care through DCF
  - Families facing housing insecurity/homelessness

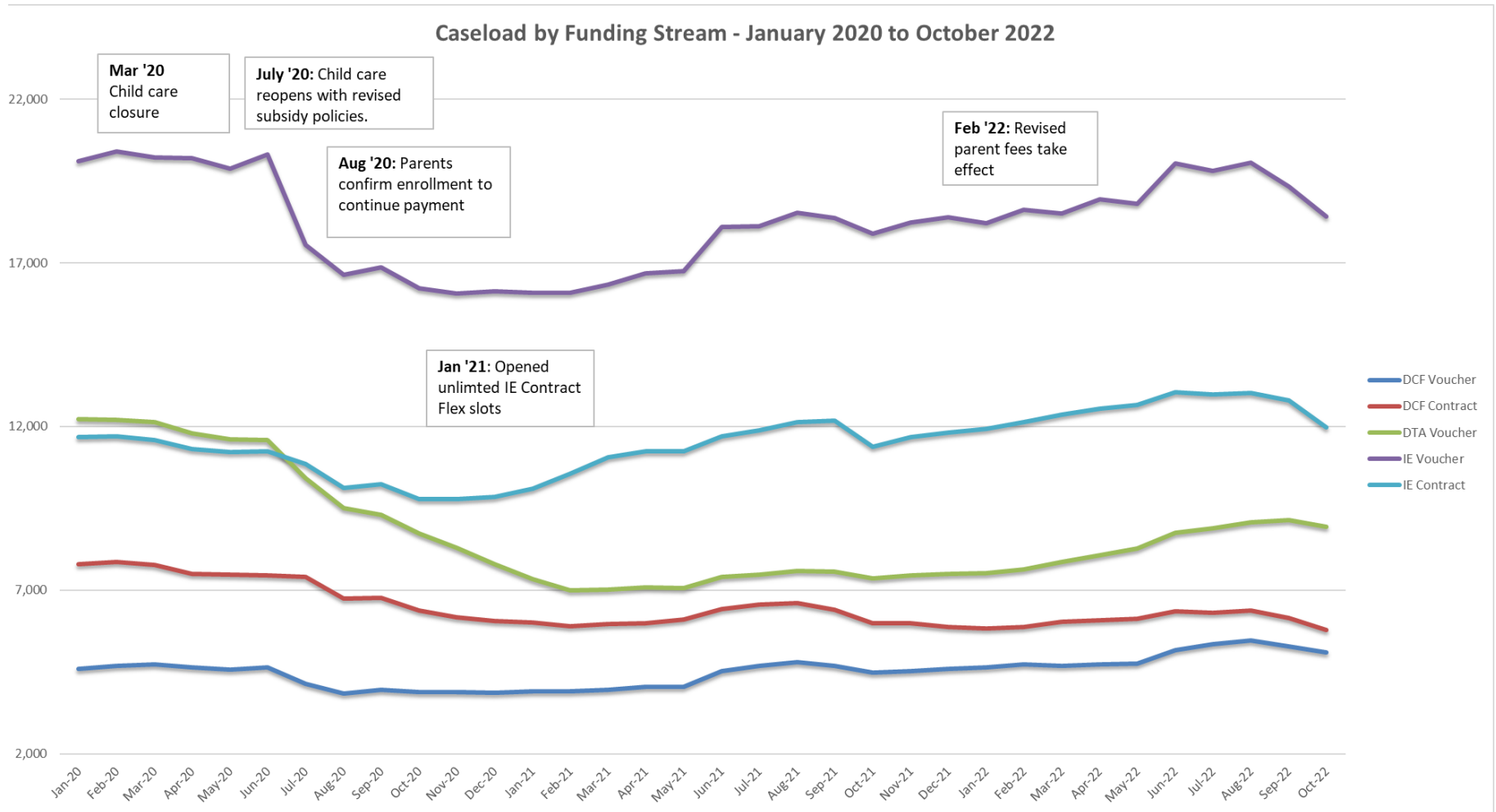- The number of providers participating in the child care financial assistance system

Decrease…

- The number of families on the Income Eligible Waitlist

- The timeline between a family's application for assistance to placement in a program.

- The timeline for appeals decisions
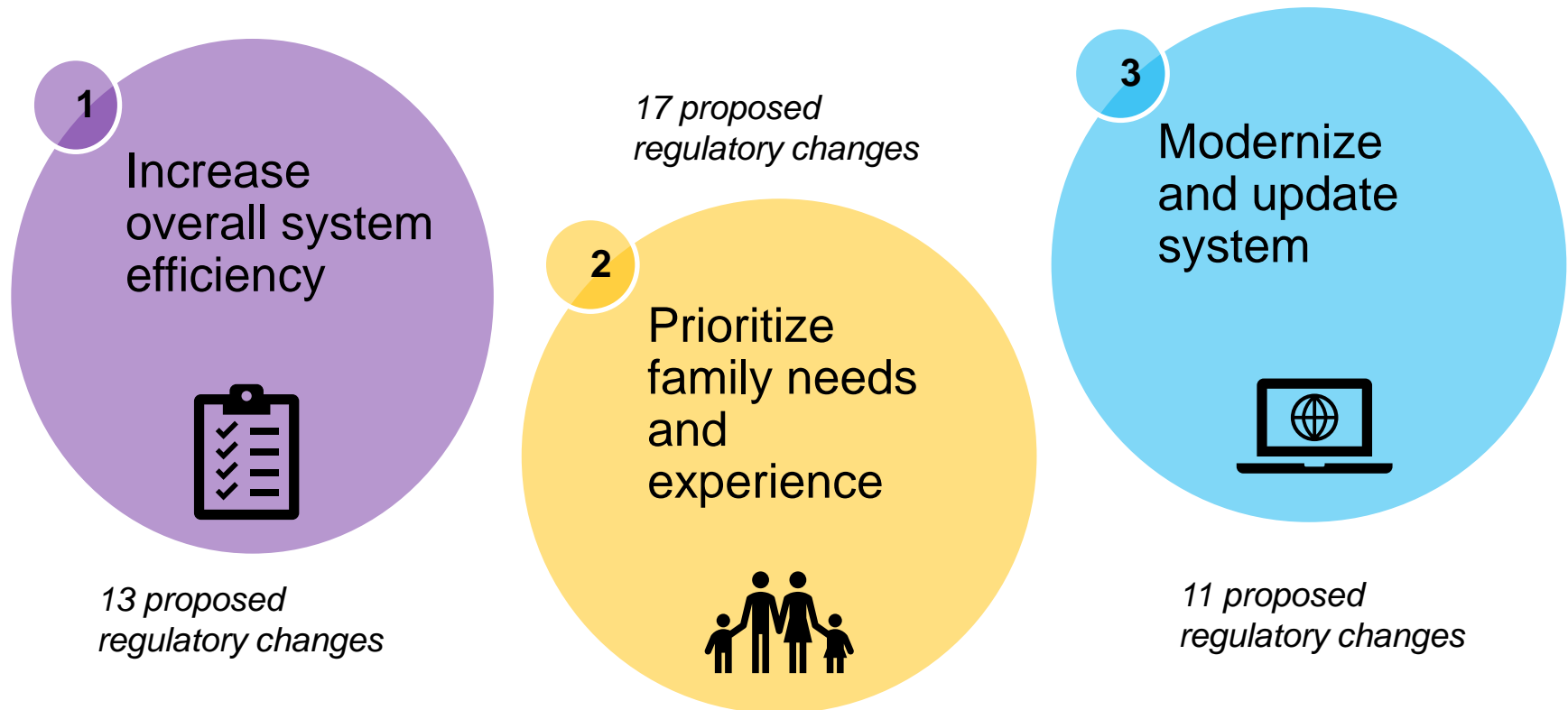
Caseload Trends, January 2020 - October 2022

Caseload by Funding Stream - January 2020 to October 2022

Mar '20 Child care closure

July '20: Child care reopens with revised subsidy policies.

Aug '20: Parents confirm enrollment to continue payment

Jan '21: Opened unlimted IE Contract Flex slots

Feb '22: Revised parent fees take effect

Legend:
- DCF Voucher
- DCF Contract
- DTA Voucher
- IE Voucher
- IE Contract

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Three Areas of Reform
Child Care Financial Assistance Regulations

Currently **41** regulatory changes under consideration, categorized into **three core areas of reform:**

1 Increase overall system efficiency

13 proposed regulatory changes

17 proposed regulatory changes

2 Prioritize family needs and experience

3 Modernize and update system

11 proposed regulatory changes

Increase overall system efficiency

Approach:
- **Streamline and clarify roles/responsibilities** (i.e., revisit subsidy administrators' responsibilities to shift the burden away from the parent, consider affirmative outreach at different stages of child care financial assistance engagement)
- **Reduce documentation burdens** (paystubs, reduce duplication at reauthorization issues, broaden documentation options/streamline requirements, eligibility alignment with participation in other public assistance programs)
- **Use more inclusive and accessible language** to ensure policies and regulations are streamlined and written in simplified, clear, strength-based language

Prioritize family needs and experience

Approach:
- **More supports for families** (i.e., at the beginning of the application process with pre-application consultation, and updated one-pagers)
- **Alleviate burdens on families** (streamline and reduce duplication in the verification process)
- **Extend timelines** to ensure the stability of care for children and families are supported completely (i.e., post-transitional)
- **Reduce rigidity/increase flexibility** for families, without compromising the integrity or strength of our CCDF obligation

3

Modernize and update system

Approach:

- **Improve alignment** across EEC regulatory frameworks and partner agency policies and procedures
- **Strengthen partnerships** with financial assistance for child care-involved agencies to ensure processes are efficient and families are supported through seamless coordination and communication
- Evaluate and either extend or remove **COVID flexibilities**

Next Steps: Child Care Financial Assistance Regulation Reform
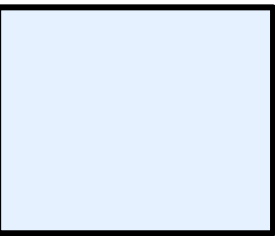## From Approval, Promulgation to Implementation

We are **here.**

Regulation packet sent to Secretary of State; public comment period commences*

Finalize revised policies and procedures based off newly approved regulations

Effective Date of Regulations and Policies

Anticipated Presentation of Final Draft Regulation Changes to Board for vote to send to public comment

Board reviews public comment; potentially votes time on Regulations for promulgation

Deployment of new policies and procedures to field (trainings, new materials)

December 13, 2022

December 14

March 14, 2023

March/April 2023

May/June 2023

July 1, 2023

EEC has discretion over timeline of public comment period

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Providing Access to Child Care Financial Assistance for Early Education and Care Staff

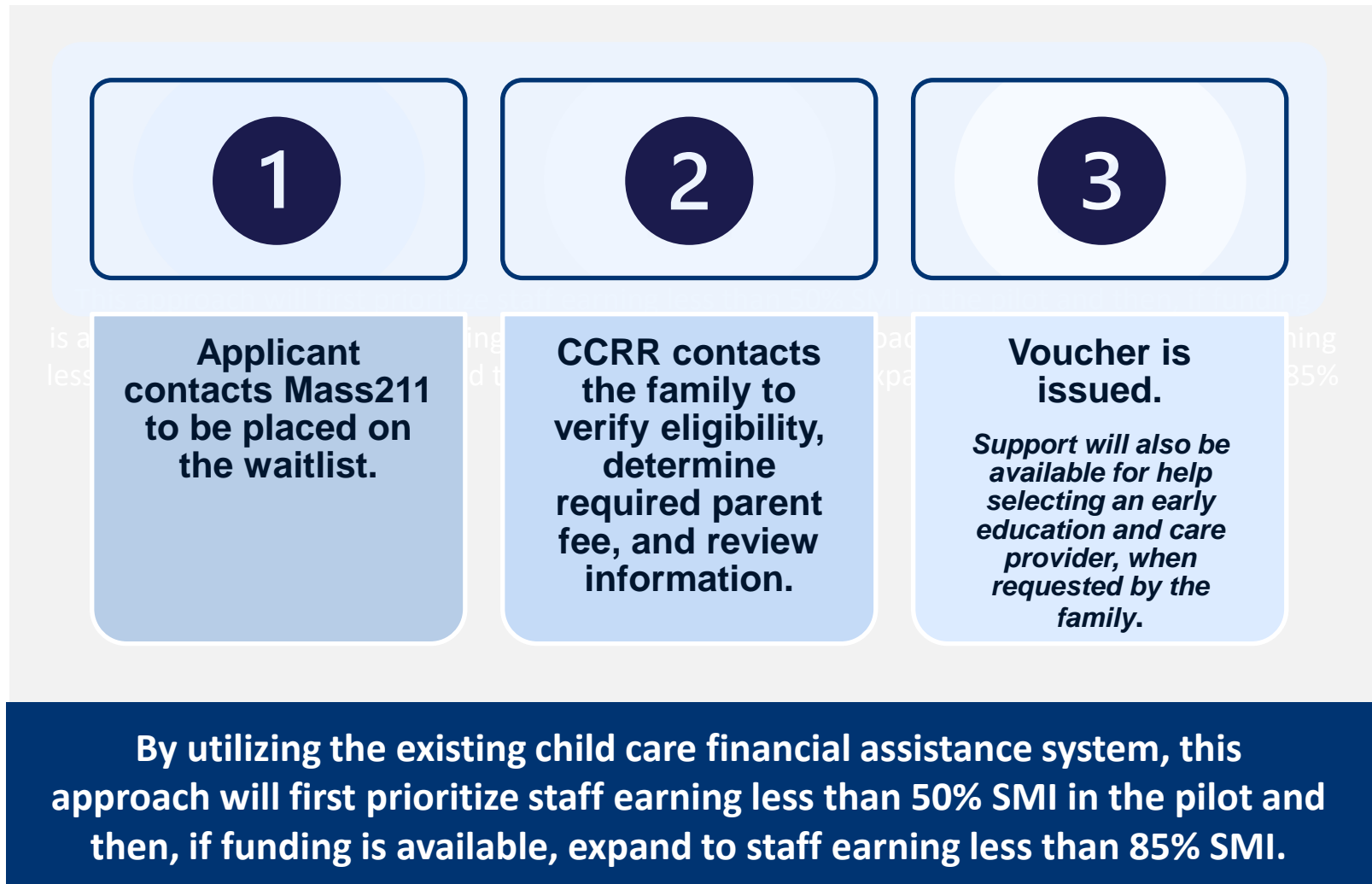# Pilot Program to assist with recruitment and retention of educators

Background
- The state's FY23 budget includes $10M for "grants to early education and care providers for costs associated with personal child care"
- The goal of this funding to assist child care providers in recruiting and retaining staff in programs by offering this benefit.

Current Status
- EEC is working to develop and launch a pilot program to support access to affordable child care for the lowest paid educators and staff in early education programs through the existing voucher system.

- By utilizing the voucher system, it will provide immediate access for children through an existing system and payment mechanism.

- EEC is proposing to launch the pilot with an initial 800 vouchers in early 2023, and will assess opportunities for expansion.

- EEC is in the process of finalizing eligibility criteria and implementation procedures, and will share that information with an application timeline shortly.

Proposed Enrollment and Authorization Process

Using a new priority code, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) Agencies and Mass211 will be able to expedite access to a child care vouchers for eligible families:

1
Applicant contacts Mass211 to be placed on the waitlist.

2
CCRR contacts the family to verify eligibility, determine required parent fee, and review information.

3
Voucher is issued.

Support will also be available for help selecting an early education and care provider, when requested by the family.

By utilizing the existing child care financial assistance system, this approach will first prioritize staff earning less than 50% SMI in the pilot and then, if funding is available, expand to staff earning less than 85% SMI.

Next Steps

1. Finalize the pilot design.

2. Begin notifying partners and programs about the pilot program and provide resources to support educators and staff who are interested in participating in the pilot.

3. Launch pilot in coordination with Mass 211, CCR&Rs, providers & stakeholders.
   – Educators and staff will be able to contact Mass 211 to sign up for the pilot.
   – Educators and staff will begin receiving notification of funding availability and from CCR&Rs and verifying eligibility.

4. Following the launch of the pilot, EEC will be working collaboratively with Mass 2-1-1 and CCR&Rs to monitor and evaluate program participation.