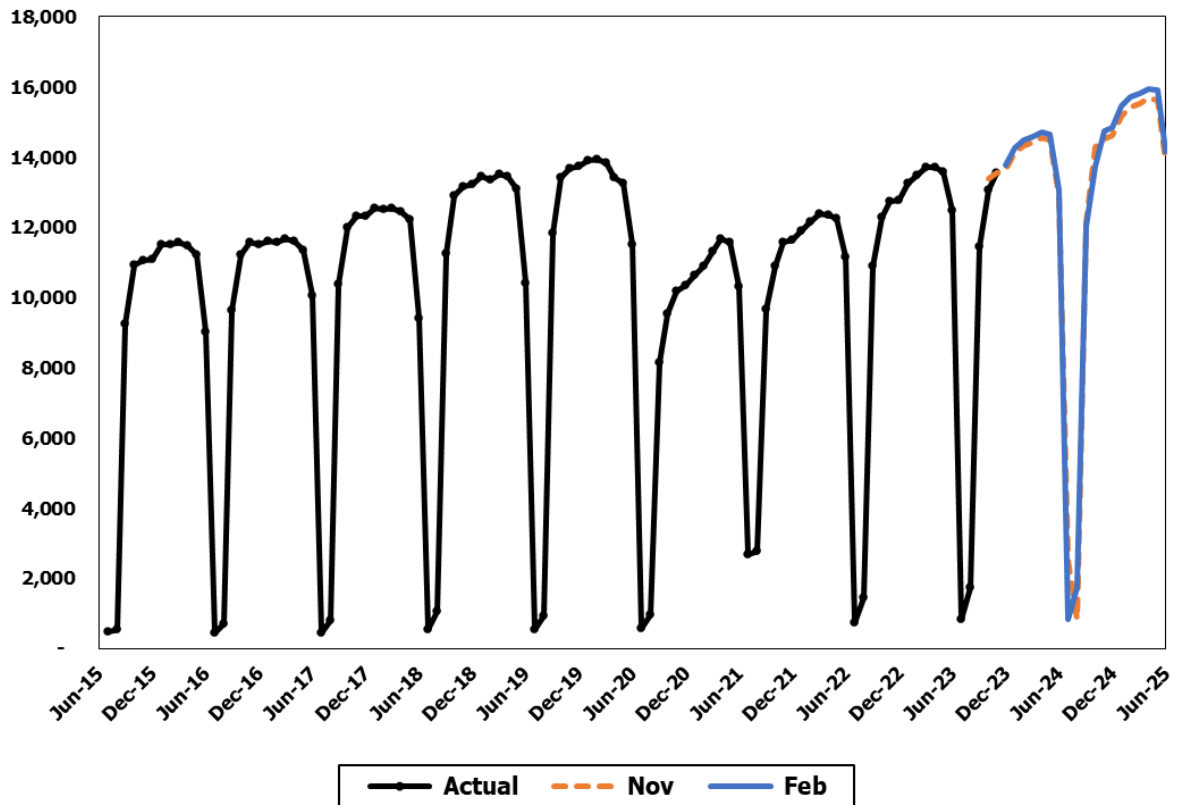


Early Childhood Education and Assistance (ECEAP)

Caseload Forecast Council
February 16, 2024

Early Childhood Education and Assistance



The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) provides comprehensive nutrition, health, education, and family support services to eligible children between the ages of three and five years old who are ineligible for kindergarten to enhance their opportunities for success in the common school system. ECEAP enrollment is forecasted as total annual enrollment calculated as a ten-month average to more accurately reflect that the majority of enrollment occurs during the standard school year.

ECEAP entitlement eligibility is primarily based on a child’s age and family income; however, children otherwise ineligible may also participate under rules adopted by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), provided that the number of such children is no more than 25 percent of total program enrollment.

Forecast Comparisons (Fiscal Year Averages)

Fiscal Year	Nov-23 Forecast	Feb-24 Forecast	Nov to Feb Difference	Percent Difference
2024	13,938	14,015	76	0.5%
2025	15,025	15,088	62	0.4%

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The February 2024 forecast is, on average, 69 cases or 0.5 percent higher than the November 2023 forecast for the 2023-25 Biennium.

Tracking the Current Forecast

Month	Nov-23		Variance	Percent
	Forecast	Actual		Variance
Oct-23	13,374	13,062	-312	-2.3%
Nov-23	13,545	13,547	2	0.0%

Actuals are tracking, on average, 155 cases or 1.2 percent below the November forecast.

Fiscal Year Caseload Change

	Fiscal Year	Caseload	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
Actual	2016	10,965		
	2017	11,294	329	3.0%
	2018	11,989	695	6.2%
	2019	12,943	955	8.0%
	2020	13,401	458	3.5%
	2021	10,619	-2,782	-20.8%
	2022	12,136	1,517	14.3%
	2023	13,103	966	8.0%
Forecast	2024	14,015	912	7.0%
	2025	15,088	1,073	7.7%

The number of children enrolled in ECEAP has grown steadily from a low point in the 2020-2021 school year; however, due to program expansion, the percentage of funded slots that are occupied by students is still below pre-pandemic levels. Nearly all the enrollment growth in the 2022-2023 school year was from children who are not entitlement eligible: the average entitled caseload in the 2022-23 school year was 3 cases or a negligible percentage higher than in the 2021-2022 school year, while non-entitled enrollment over the same period grew by 963 cases or 111.2 percent. Both entitled and non-entitled enrollment counts have been higher in the 2023-2024 school year than in 2022-2023.

Risks to the Forecast

Risks to this forecast are moderate to high. If the growth in the non-entitlement portion slows in 2024-2025, the forecast may require further revisions. There are additional risks to this forecast from potential competition with other early education options.