

# Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Dr. Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships.



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Overview

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- Legislatively created in 2004.
- Distinct from GaDOE.
- Commissioner appointed by the Governor. Currently five Deputy Commissioners, three “chiefs”, and the DECAL Foundation and Head Start Collaboration Office.
- Over 800 staff and a 1.2 billion dollar budget
- Pros:
  - Shared Resources
  - Ability to address distinct Early Education Needs
- Cons:
  - Sometimes, though not as much, not seen as “education”
  - Many providers have many interactions with DECAL.





# Programs within DECAL

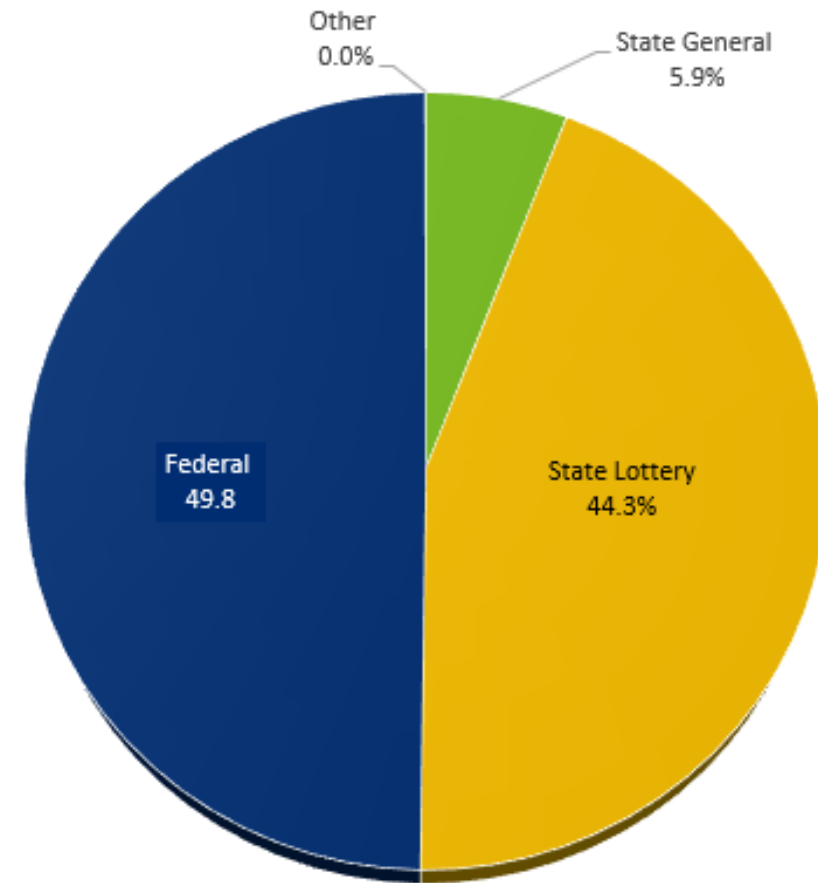
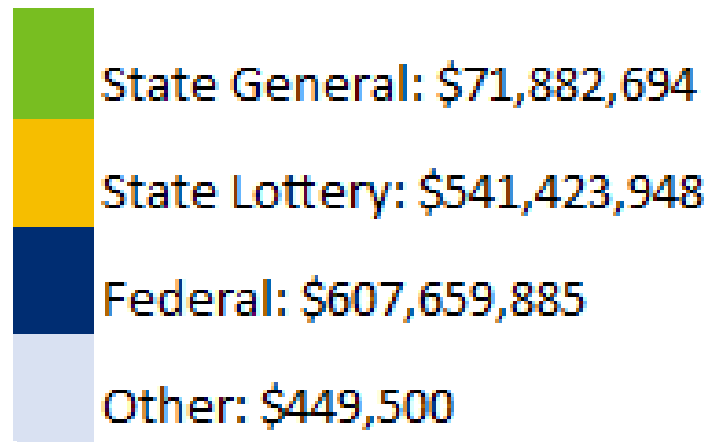
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- Georgia's Pre-K Program
- Child Care Licensing
- Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Georgia's subsidy program
- Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system
- Nutrition Services
- Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Initiatives related to 2Gen, Community Resources, Inclusion and Behavior Supports, Infants and Toddlers, Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH), Workforce Development and Professional Learning, Research

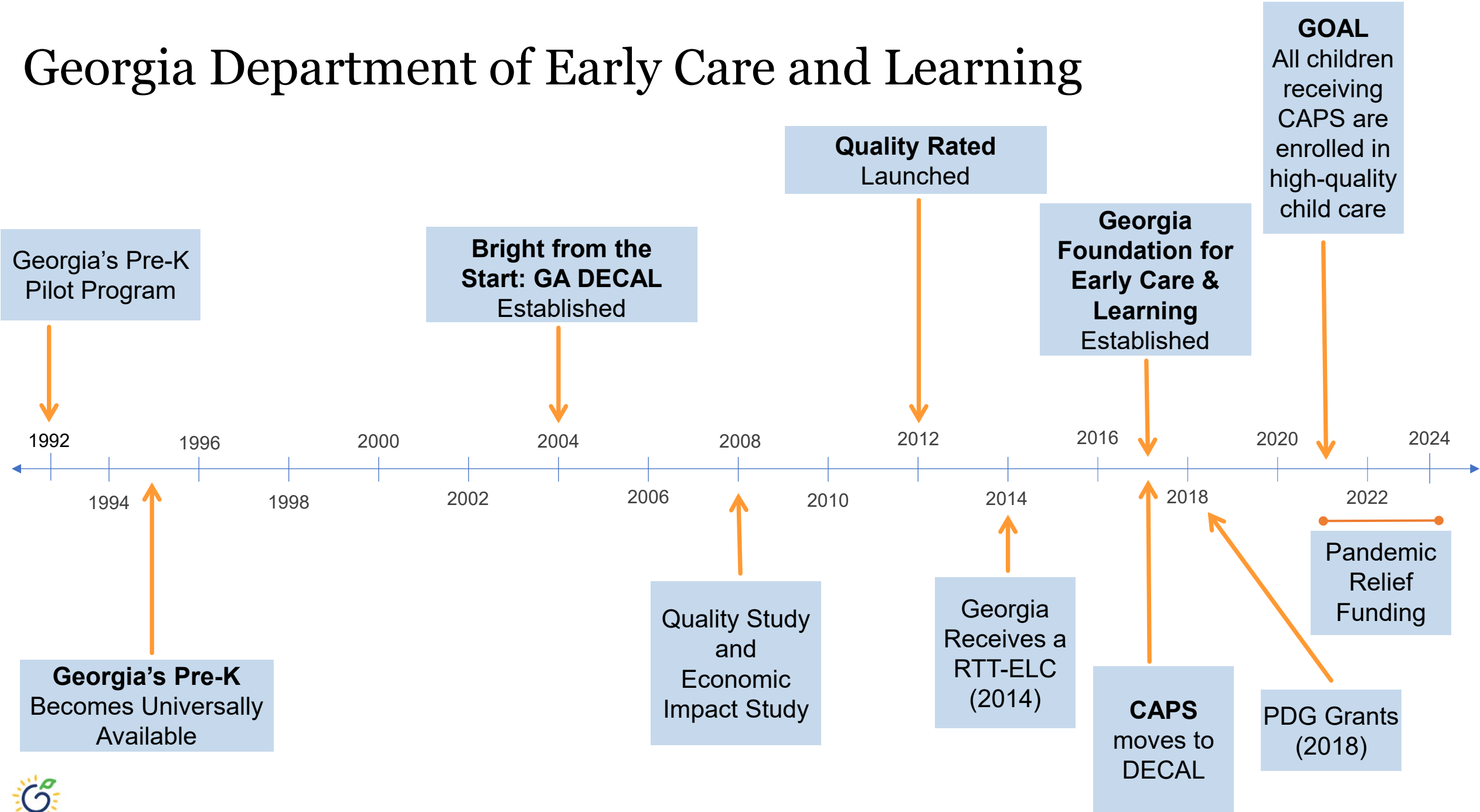


# DECAL Budget by Fund Source

## SFY 2025: \$1,221,466,027



# Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



# DECAL Program Overview and Select Highlights



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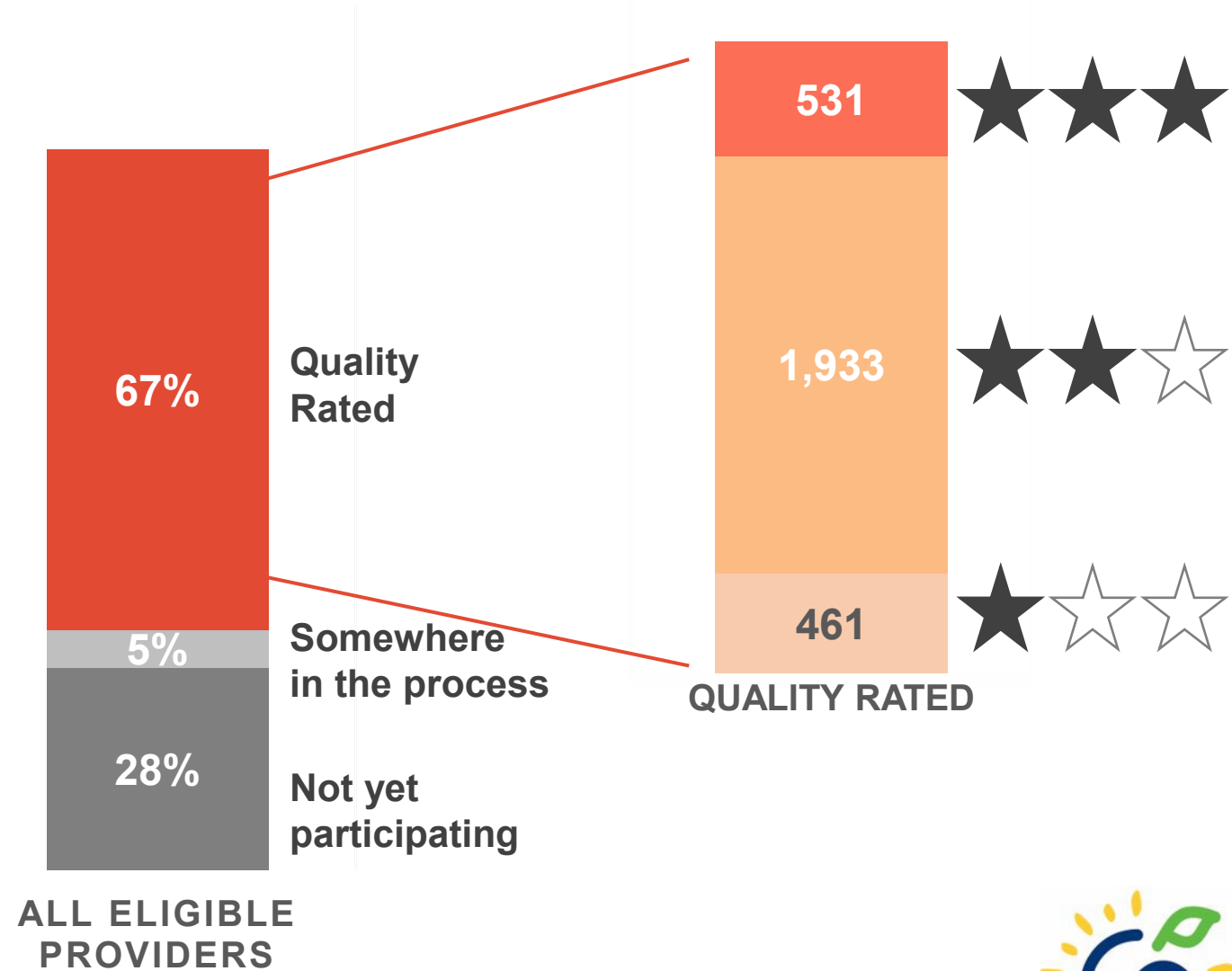
# Commonly Asked Data Points

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- **4,275** licensed child care providers
  - **3,209** Child Care Learning Centers
  - **1,066** Family Child Care Learning Homes
- **53,000** children are currently using a CAPS scholarship.
- **3,867** Georgia's Pre-K classrooms at **1,888** sites serving **70,572** children
- **58,135,916** meals served in CACFP and **2,930,244** in Happy Helpings (SFSP) in FFY 2024



# Quality Rated by the Numbers



# QR Workforce Bonus Update

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**19,116**

Total Number of **Applications** for QRWB

**14,882 Staff** Have Received QRWB

**2,415 Providers (82%)** w/ Staff that Received QRWB

**\$7.4 Million in QRWB Funds** Distributed Since April



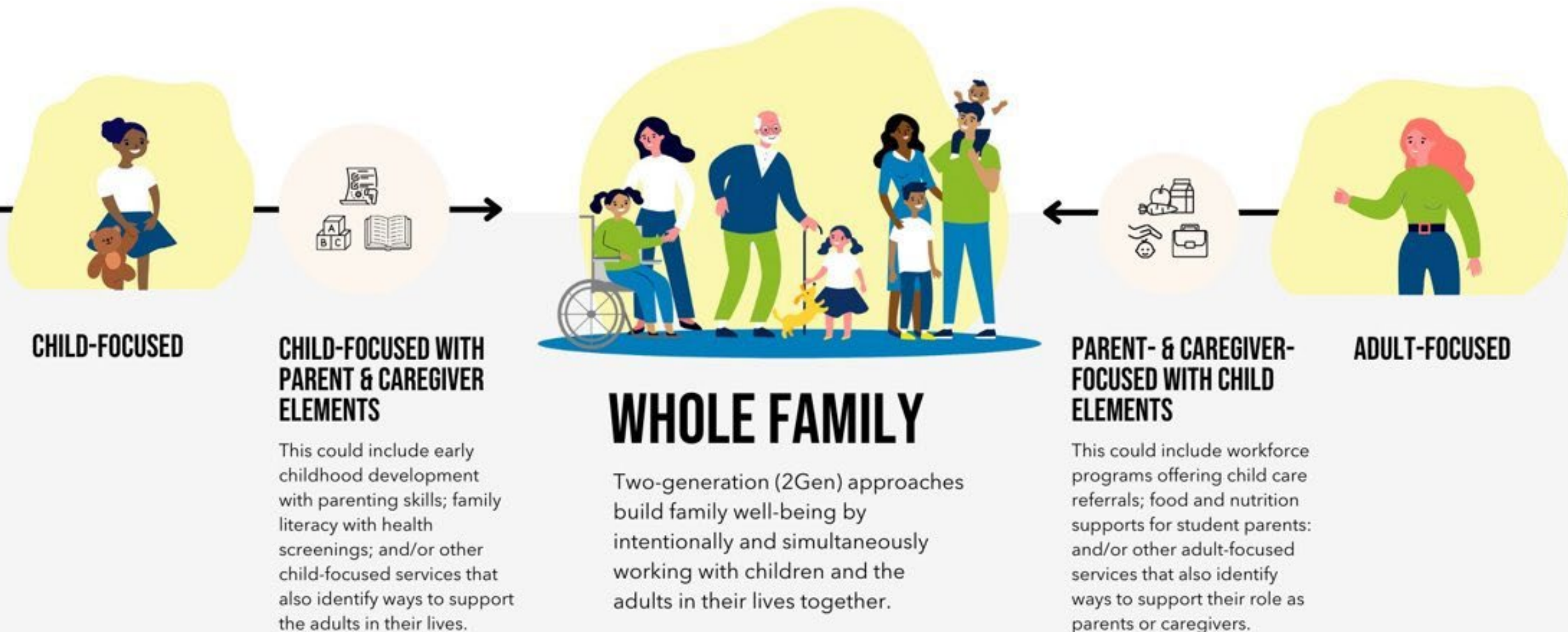
# Pre-K Summer Transition Program (STP)

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- Targeted five-week school readiness program
- *Rising Kindergarten Program*
  - Focuses on children who did not attend Georgia's Pre-K or attended but need additional support and who will attend Kindergarten in the fall
- *Rising Pre-K Program*
  - Focuses on children whose home language is Spanish and who will attend Pre-K in the fall



# TWO-GENERATION (#2GEN) APPROACHES CENTER WHOLE FAMILIES



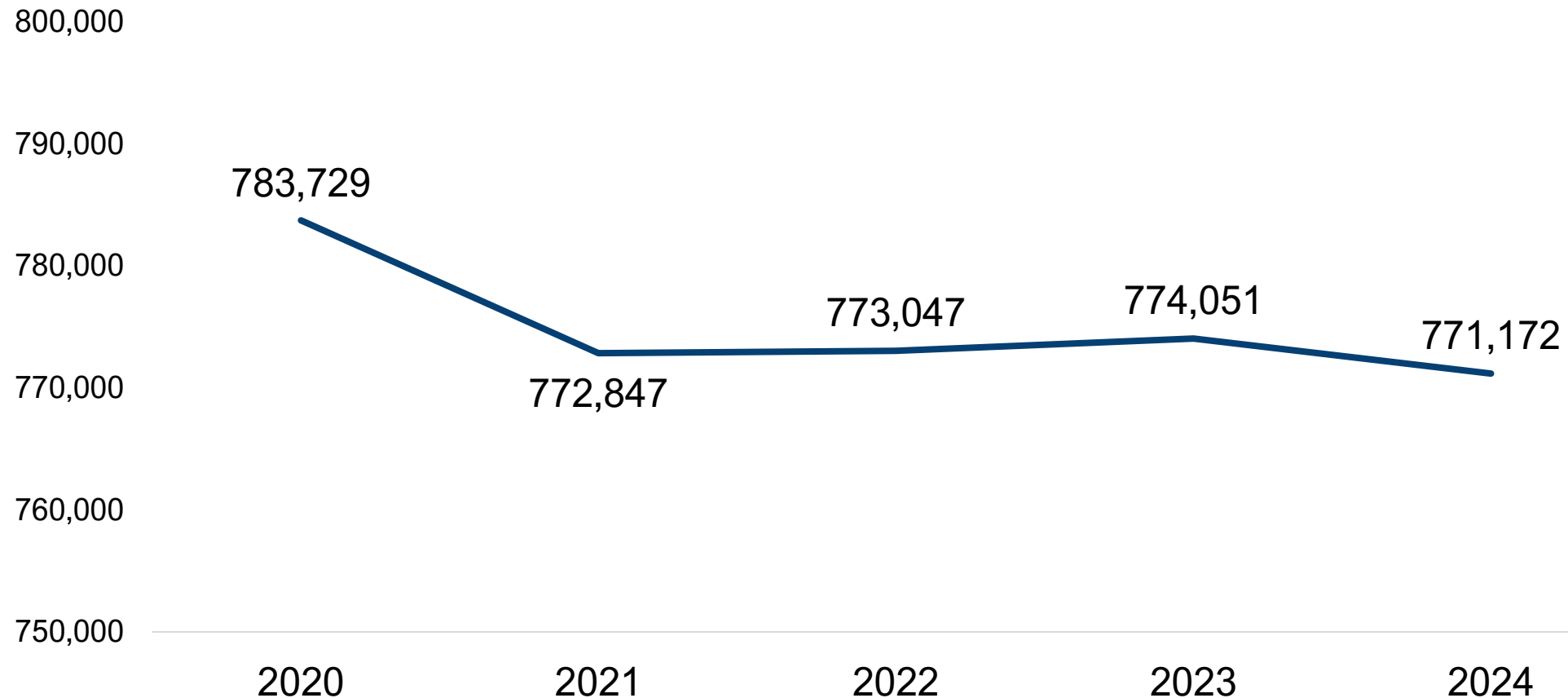
# Economic Impact Study



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# Georgia's Population: Birth Through Age 5

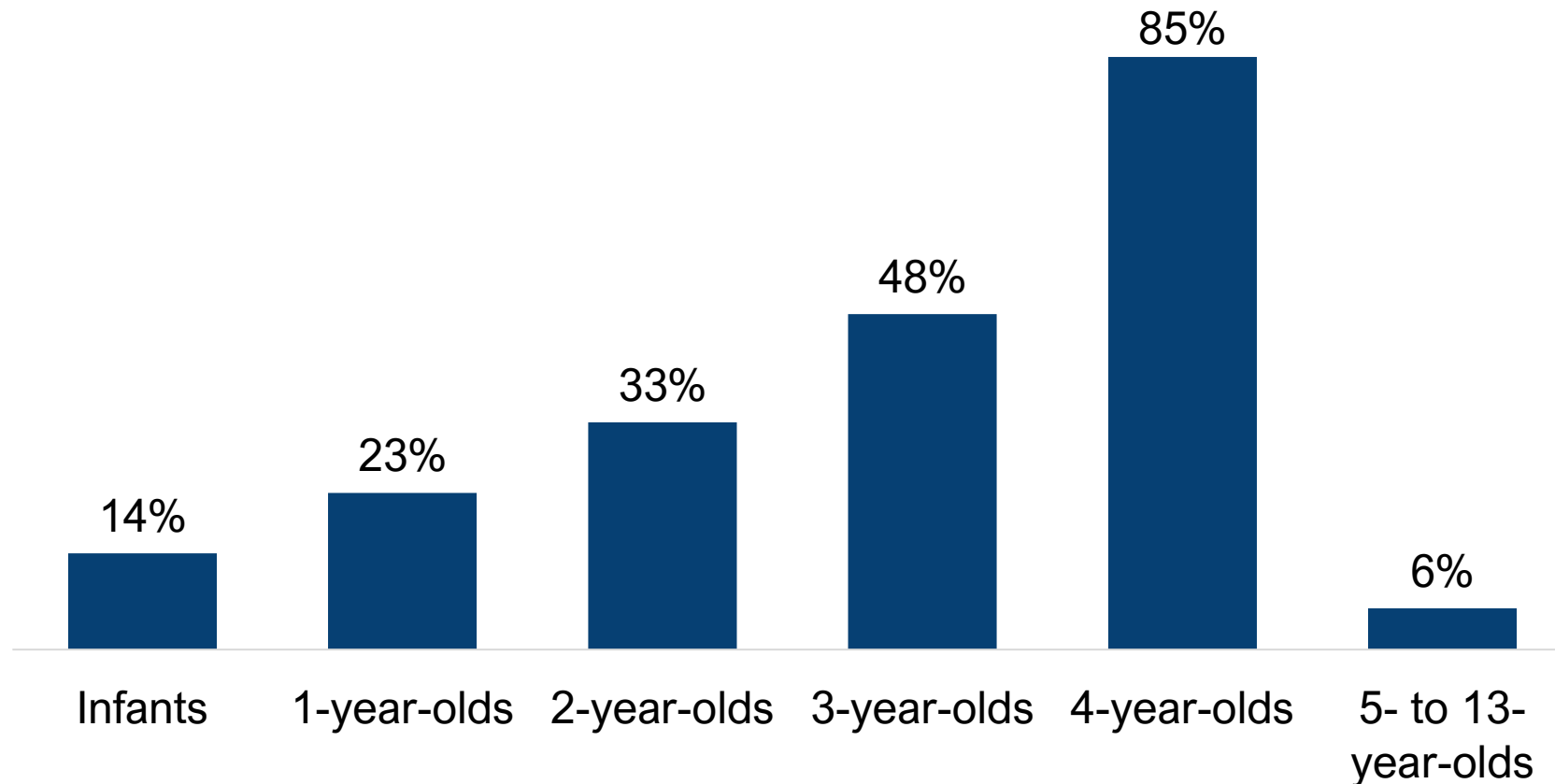
Georgia's birth through 5 population has declined by 1.6% since 2020. This is the primary source of demand for the ECE industry.



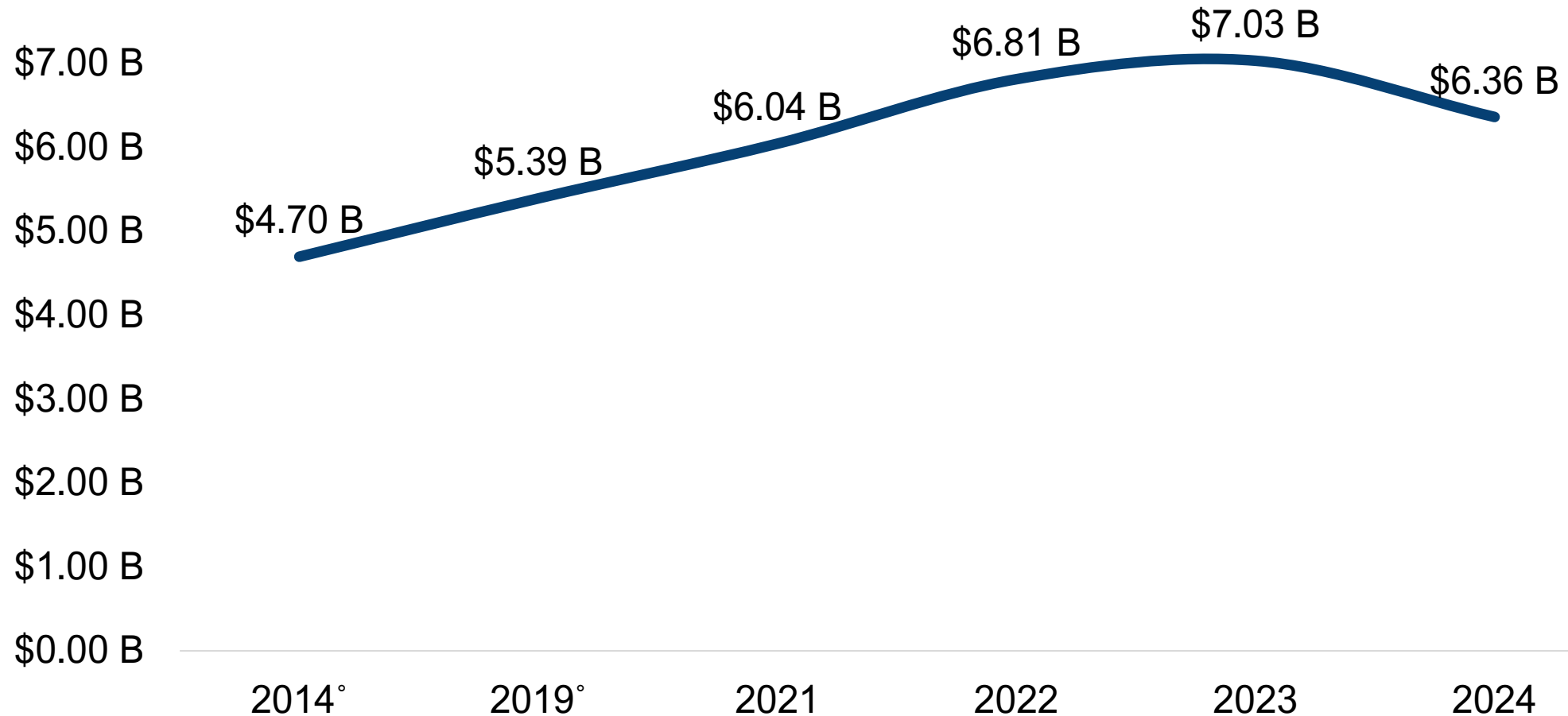
# Georgia's Population Served by Licensed or Regulated ECE Industry (2024)

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Enrollment in early care and education varies dramatically across age groups, increasing with age from birth through age 4.



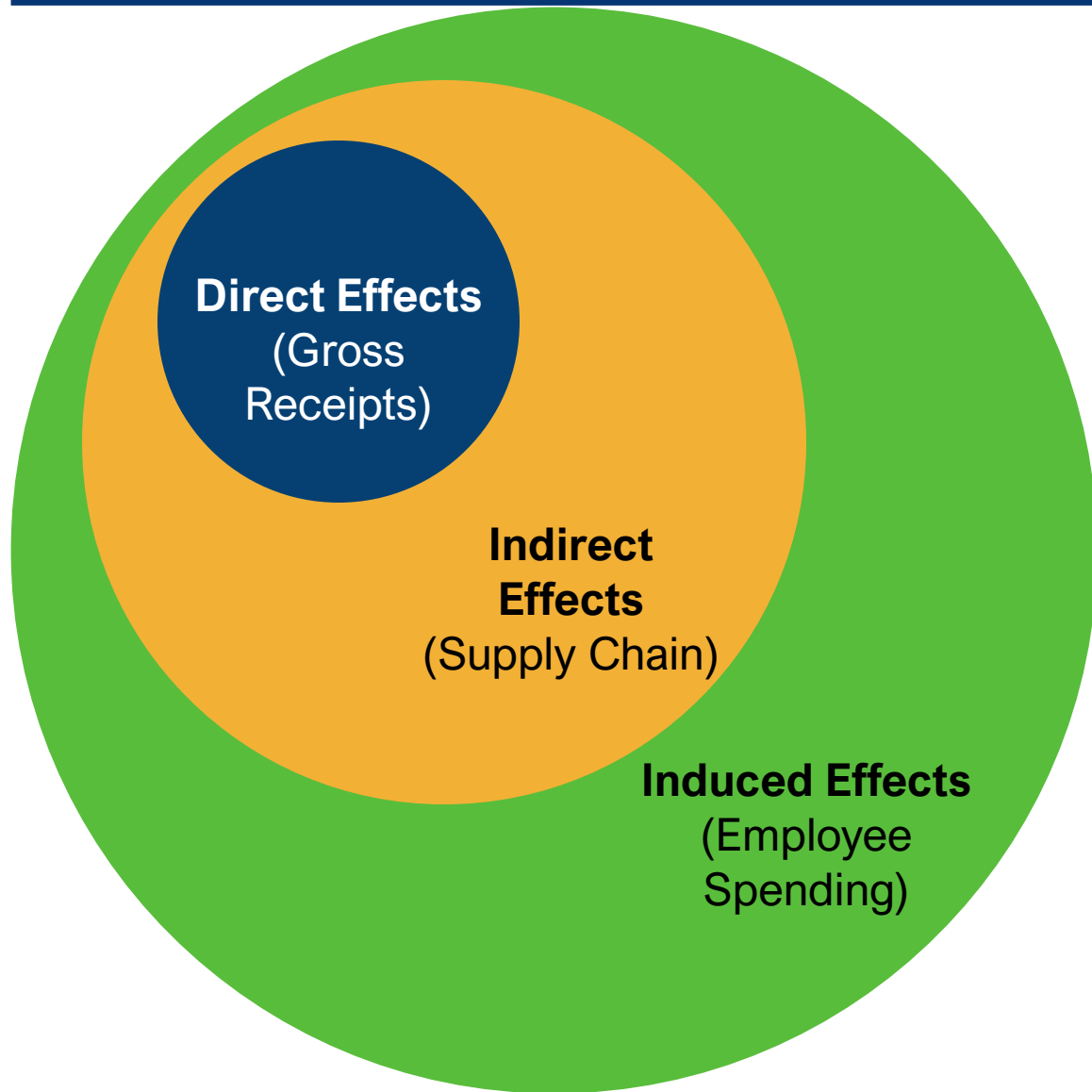
# Total Annual Economic Impact of the ECE Industry in Georgia (2014–2024)



°Note: Time intervals on the X-axis are irregular and reflect the availability of data rather than consistent yearly spacing.



# Types of Economic Impact

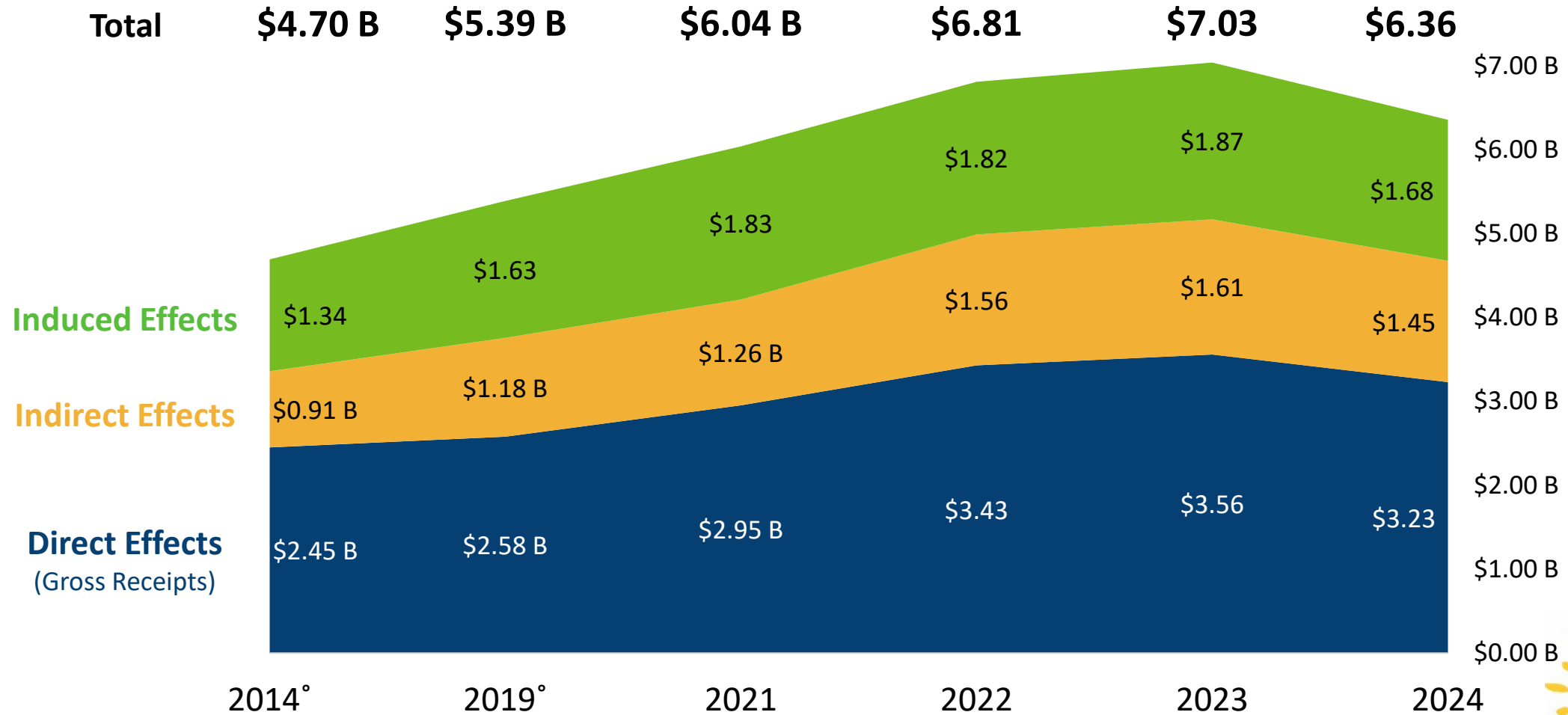


**Economic impact is measured through three types of effects:**

- 1. Direct Effects:** The money spent on a product/service.
- 2. Indirect Effects:** Business to business spending within the supply chain.
- 3. Induced Effects:** Employees' household spending due to their earned income.



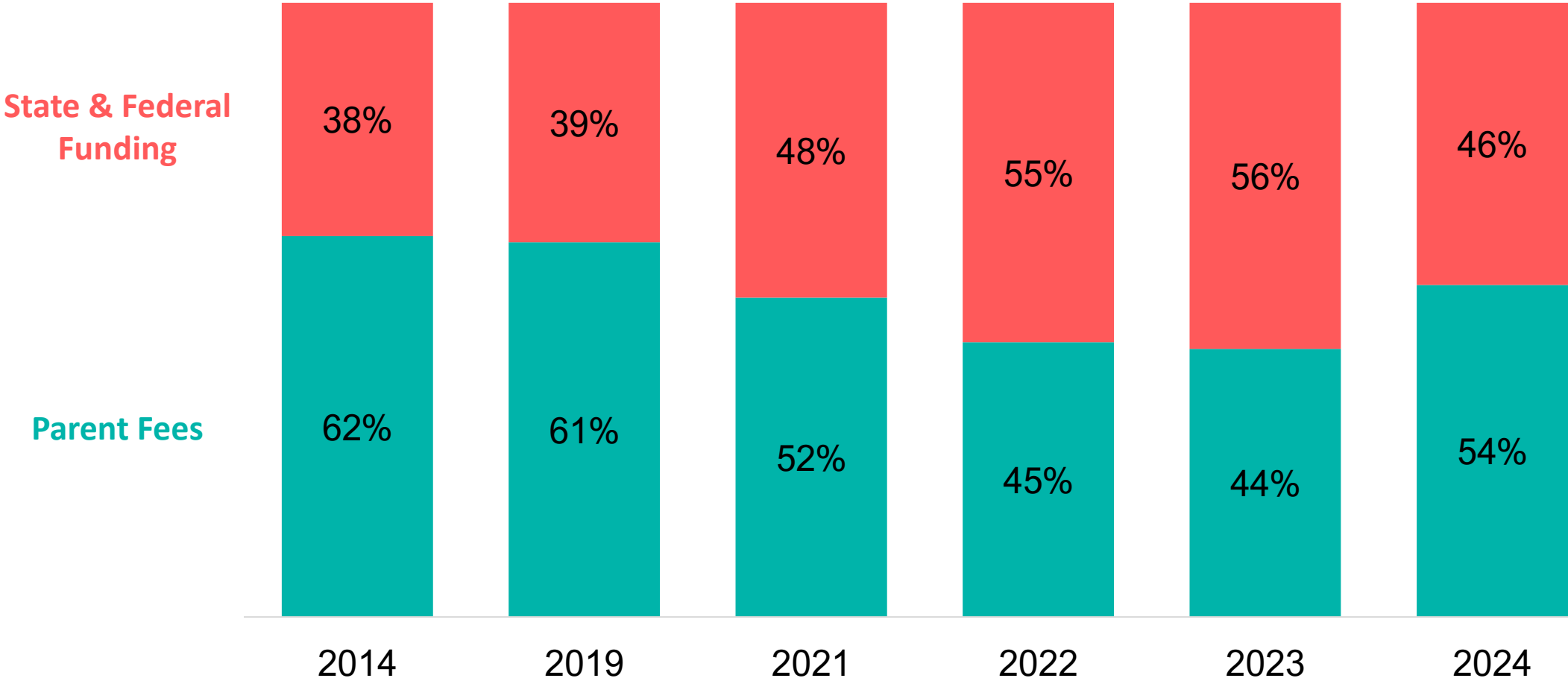
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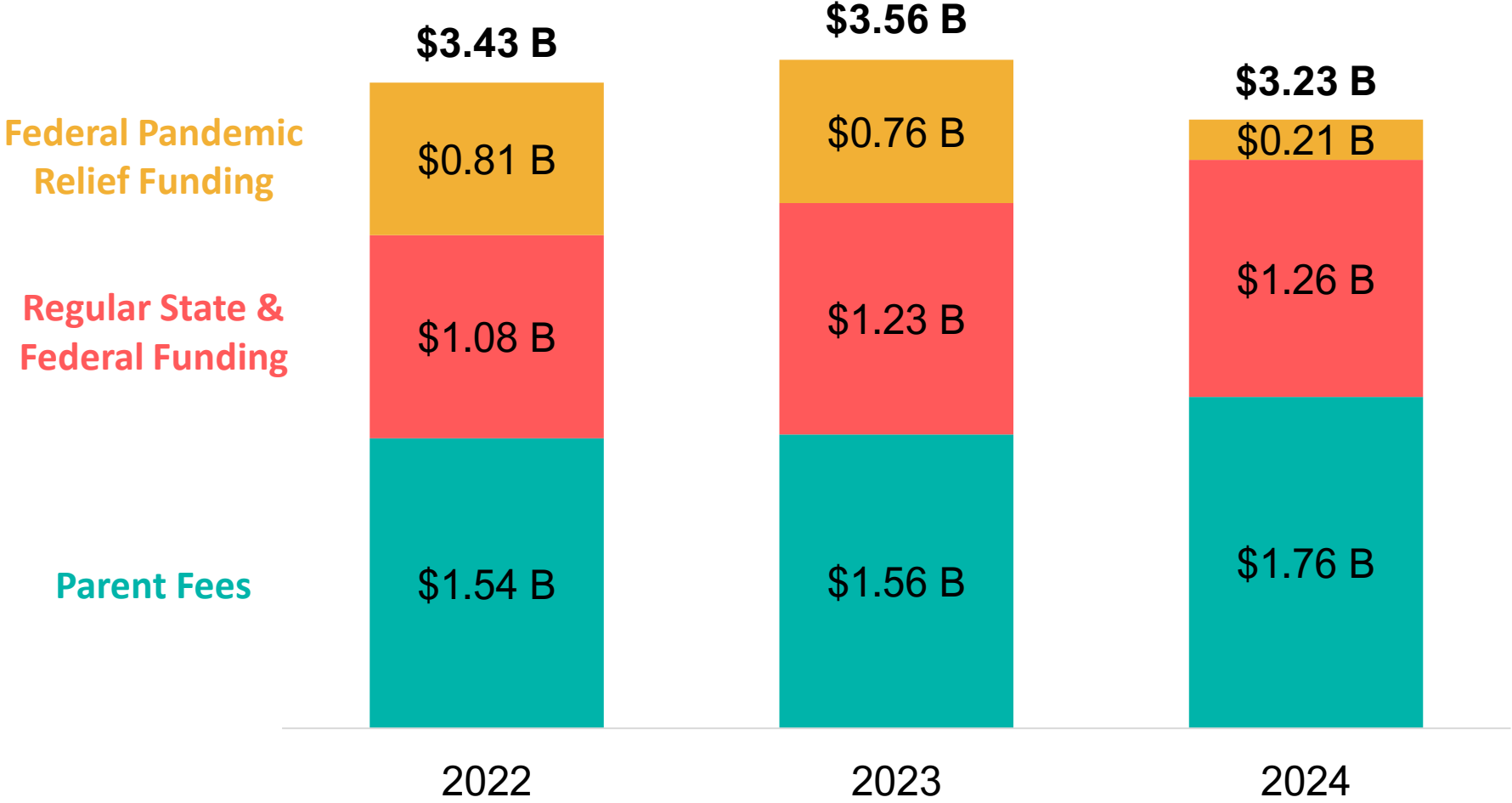
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# Georgia ECE Industry Gross Receipts Funded by Parent Fees and State/Federal Sources



# Georgia ECE Industry Gross Receipts (2022–2024)





# Importance of High-Quality Early Education



90% of brain development takes place from birth to age five

Early education is associated with improved academic achievement, cognitive development, self-regulation skills, and social-emotional development

All children benefit from high-quality preschool, but especially children from low-income families and dual language learners

Children who enter kindergarten ready to succeed are more likely to read on grade level by third grade, graduate from high school, go to college, and be productive members of the workforce