

Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment in Early Childhood Education Policy: Examining Alignment Across State Systems

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*Moving to a More Aligned System: Working across Sectors to Improve Early
Care and Education*

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Motivation: Curriculum as a policy lever to improve ECE

1. Curriculum Requirements

2. Early Learning Standards

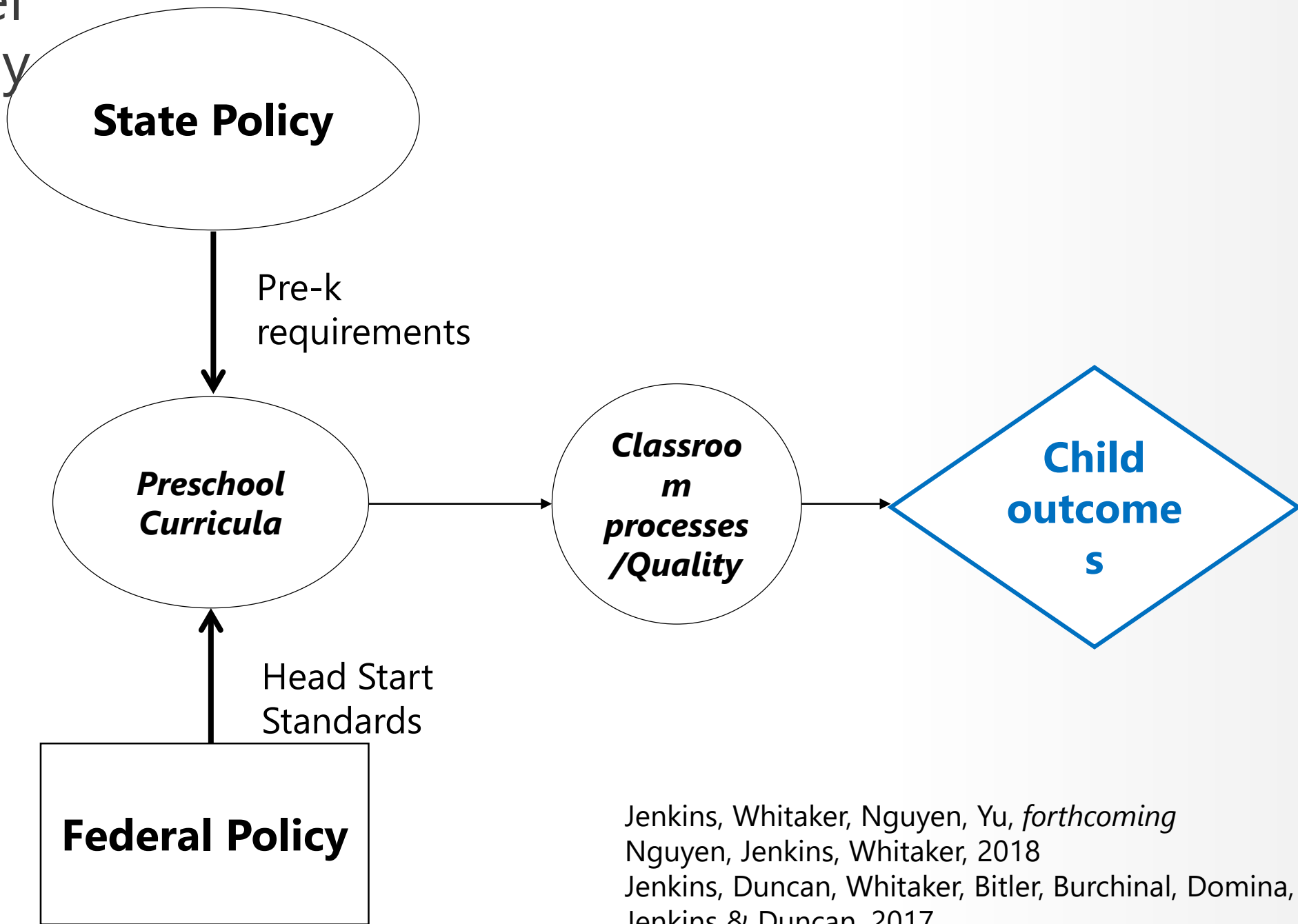
3. Regulation

- Licensing

4. Quality Rating and Information Systems (QRIS)

- Assessment
- Professional development supports

Conceptual Model for Curricula Policy



Jenkins, Whitaker, Nguyen, Yu, *forthcoming*

Nguyen, Jenkins, Whitaker, 2018

Jenkins, Duncan, Whitaker, Bitler, Burchinal, Domina,

Jenkins & Duncan, 2017



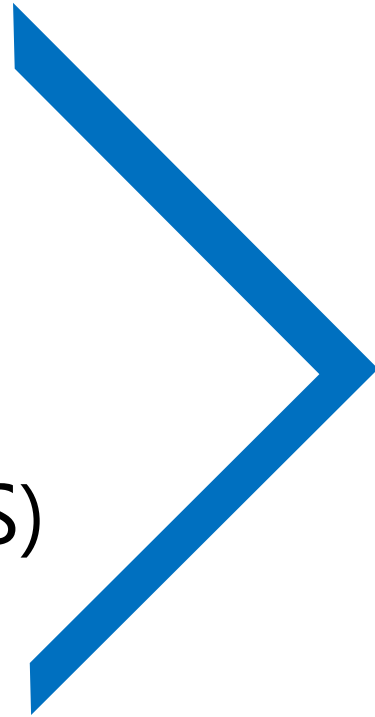
Motivation: Curriculum in the **State Policy Context**

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2. Early Learning Standards
3. Regulation
 - Licensing
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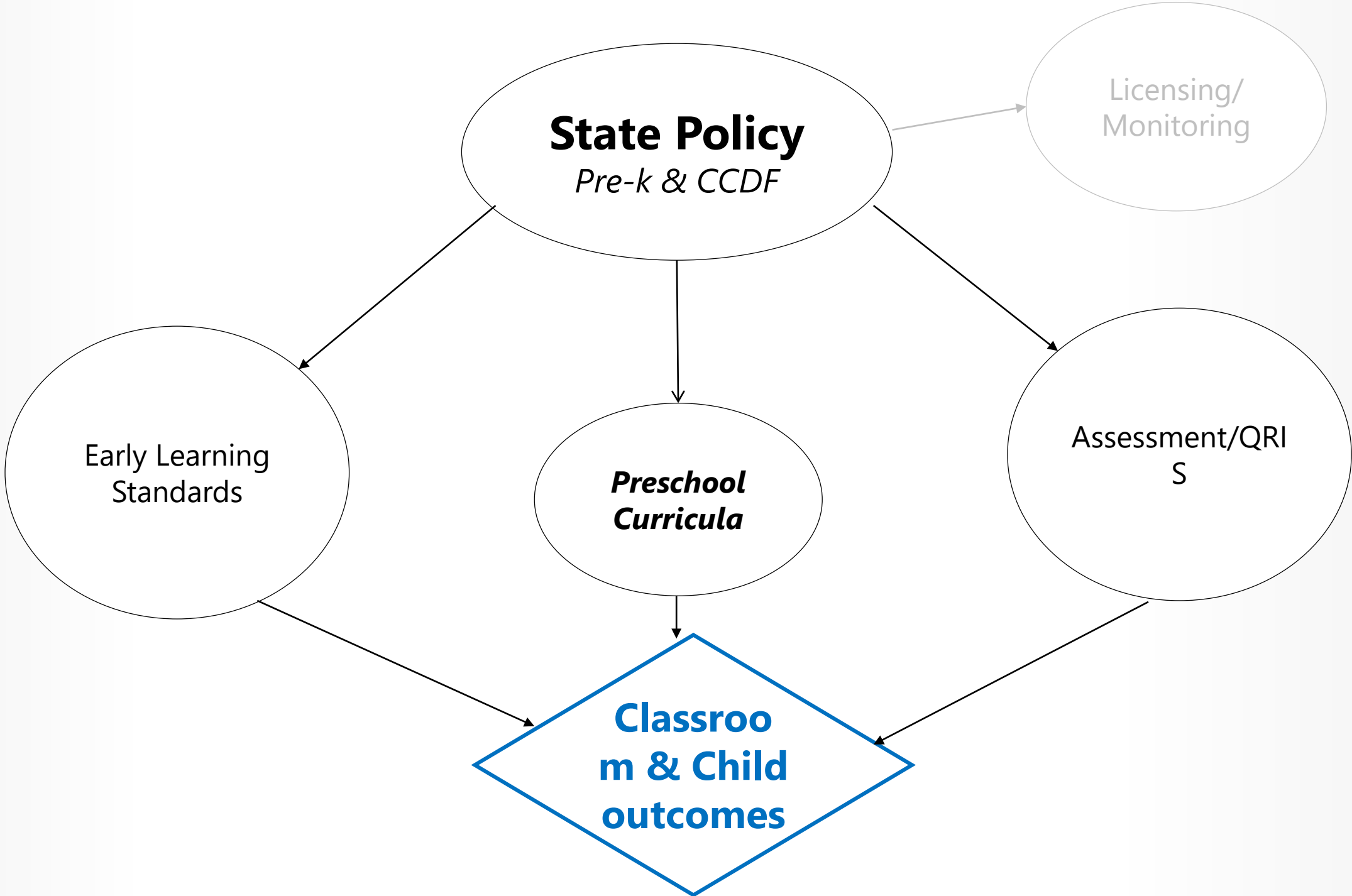
Motivation: Curriculum in the State Policy Context

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3 Pillars of K-12 Education reform
(Porter et al., 2008; 2012):

1. Standards
2. Curriculum
3. Assessment





Motivation: Limited Research on State Early Childhood Systems

ECE dispersed across state agencies

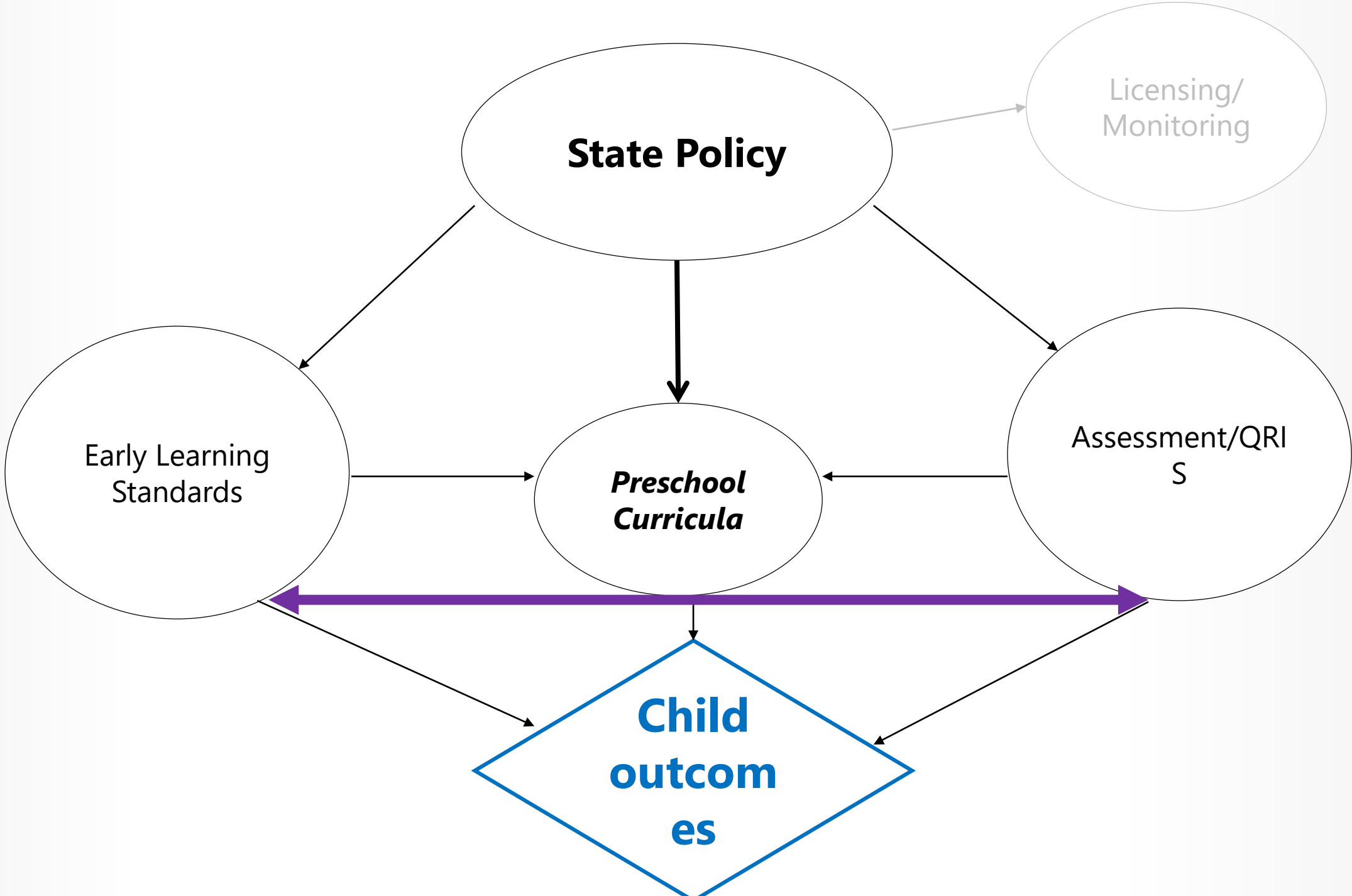
- Different government agencies responsible for different aspects of ECE policy (Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Waldfogel 2006; Witte and Trowbridge 2005; Jenkins & Henry, 2016)
- Haphazard, idiosyncratic, incoherent (Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, Thornburg, 2009)

Disorganization hinders alignment and synergy of state policies

“the haphazard funding, monitoring, and programmatic organization and infrastructure supporting efforts to foster young children’s developmental competencies in various settings undermines the capacity to deliver on that promise” (Pianta & Howes, 2009)

- Some dispersion across agencies OK for kids outcomes, but not too much (Jenkins & Henry, 2016)
 - Coordination/alignment possible if limited number of agencies involved
 - Single organization may be “master of nothing”

Call for stronger connections and alignment at state and local levels



Research Questions

1. What are the curricula requirements for state preschool programs?
 - a) Do states provide guidance in selecting curricula?
 - How much guidance?
 - b) Are specific curricular packages recommended?
 - Which packages?
 - c) Are requirements and guidance aligned across a state's CCDF and Pre-k programs?
2. To what extent are preschool curricula or early learning standards included in state or local QRISs?
 - a) Which packages?
 - b) At what levels? (*coming soon*)
3. To what extent are QRIS responsibilities dispersed across state agencies?
 - a) Are there patterns in managing agency types?

Data

50-state dataset from multiple sources, 2017

- NIEER
- QRIS Compendium
- State CCDF and Pre-k program websites/plans

1. Curricula Policies for Preschool Programs (CCDF & Pre-k)

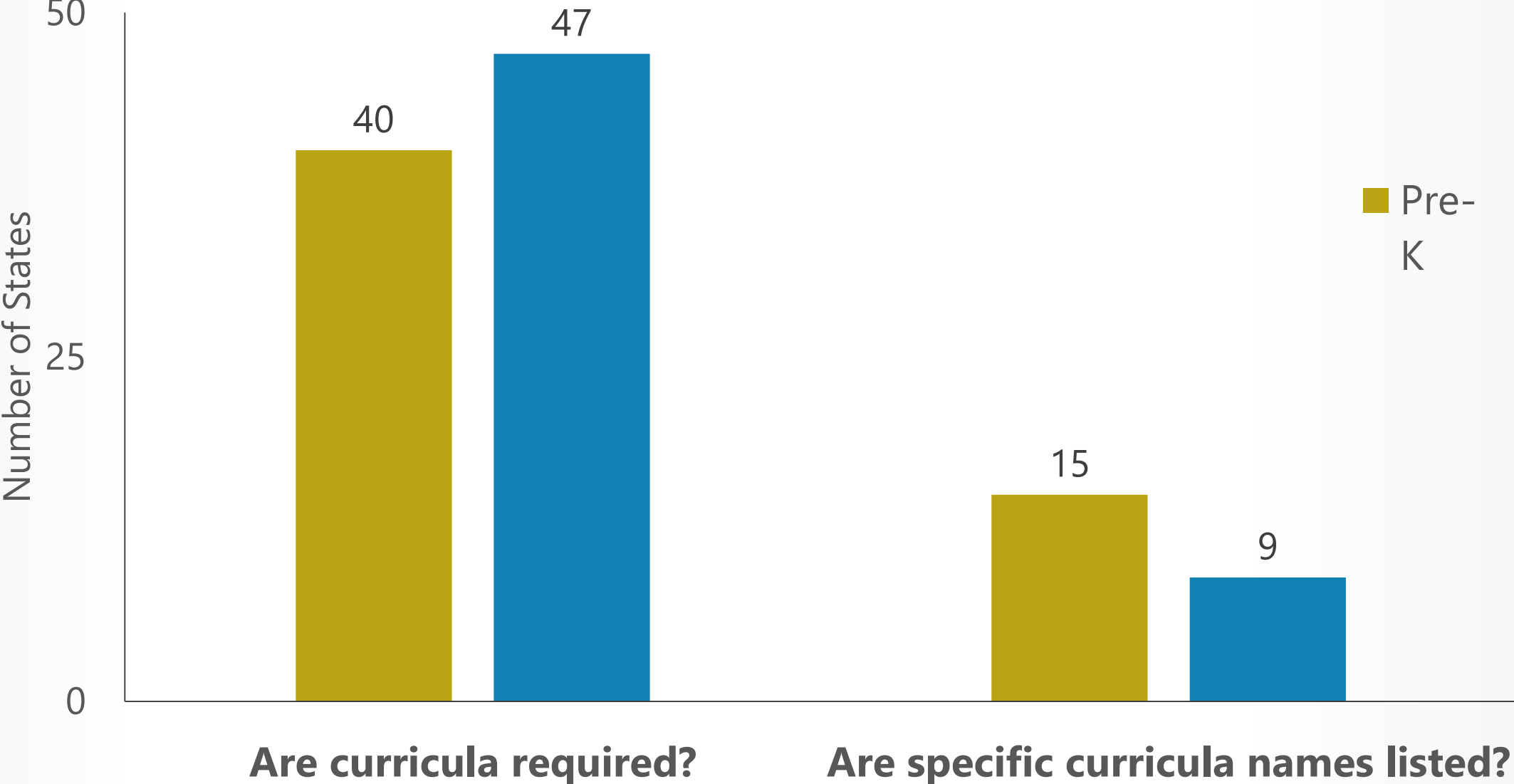
- Requirements (Yes-No)
- Support for selection & standards alignment
 - Specific Curricula packages (Yes-No; Curricula listed)
 - Guidance for selection (0-3 scale; None, Standards alignment, Strong guidance)

2. QRIS for Preschool Programs (CCDF & Pre-k)

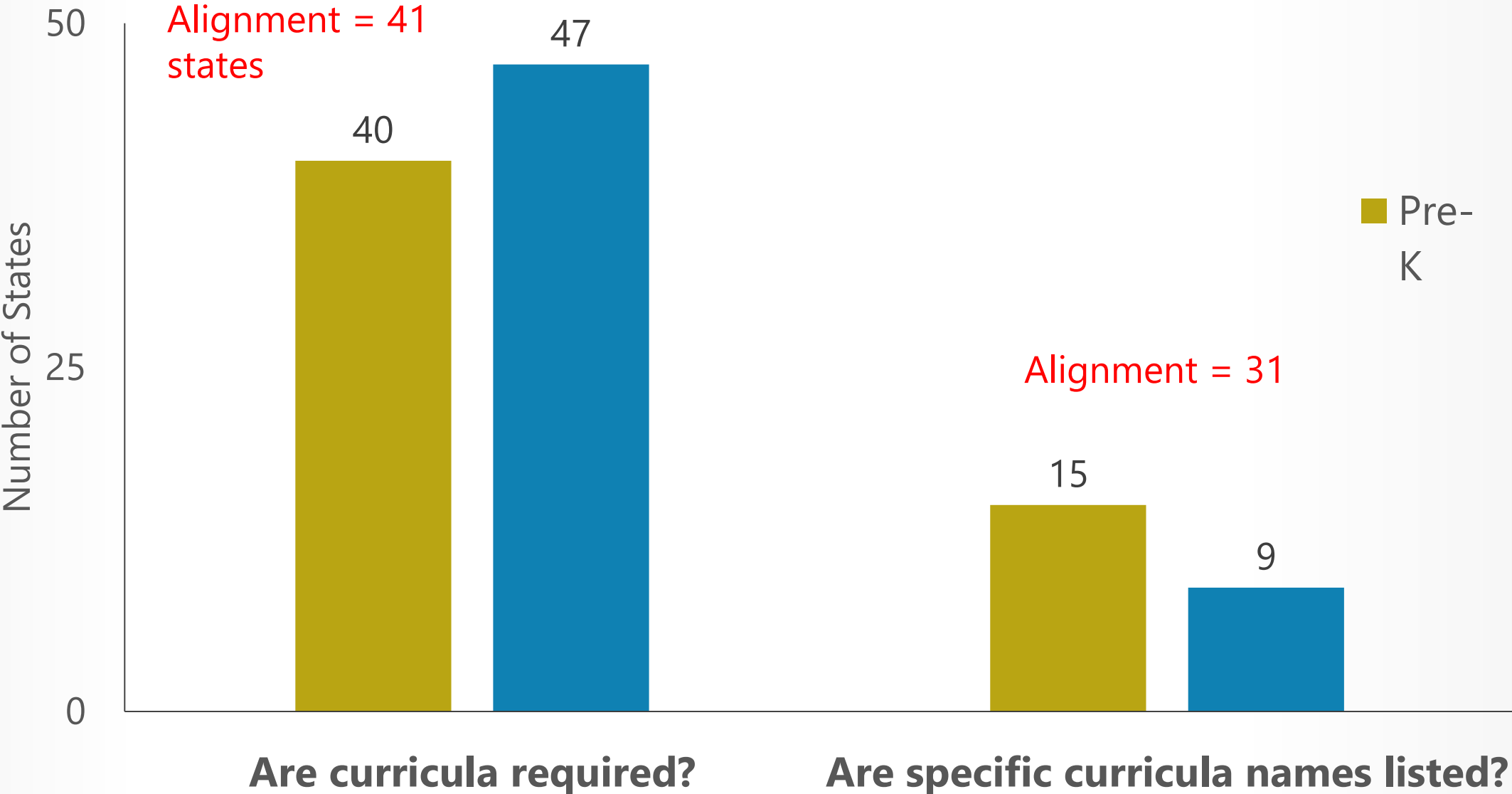
- Curricula incorporated into QRIS (Yes-No)
 - 43 States with operating QRISs
- Standards incorporated into QRIS (Yes-No)

Curricula & Standards: Number and type of curricula incorporated in QRIS

Curricula Requirements for State Pre-k and CCDF Programs

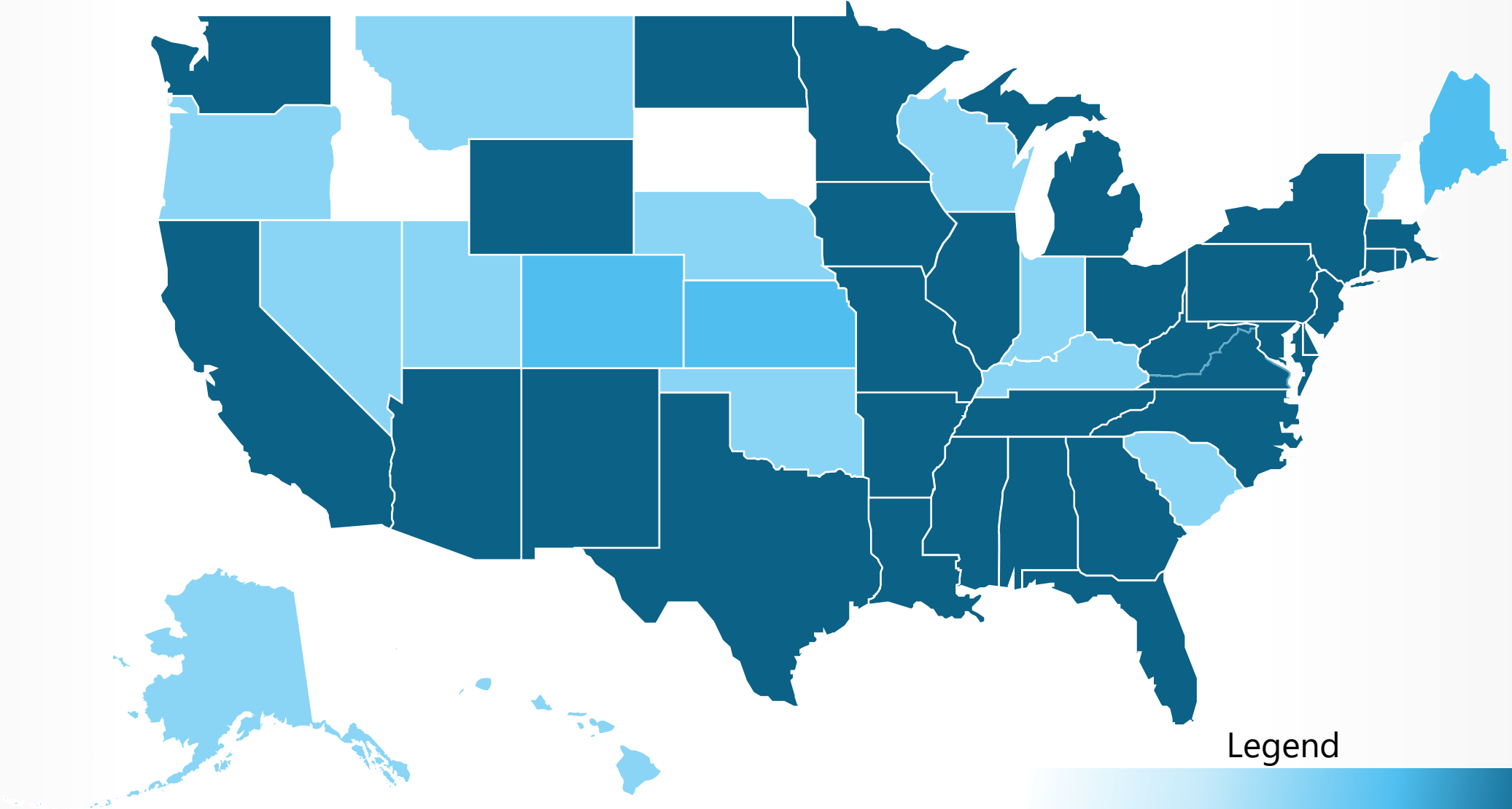


Curricula Requirements for State Pre-k and CCDF Programs





State Pre-K: Curriculum Guidance Scale



Legend

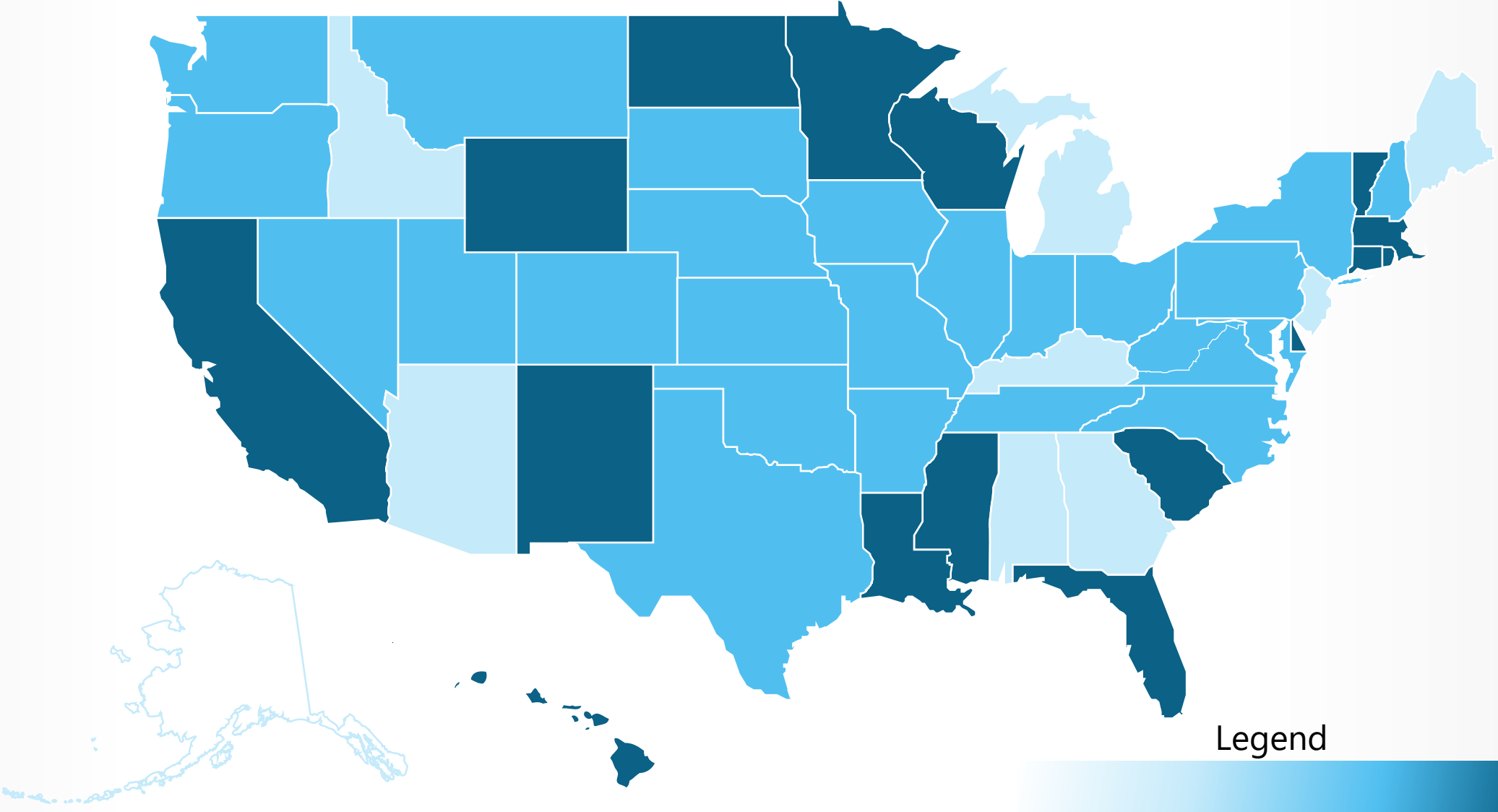


No Guidelines

Comprehensive Tool or Specific Listed Curriculum



CCDF: Curriculum Guidance Scale



Legend

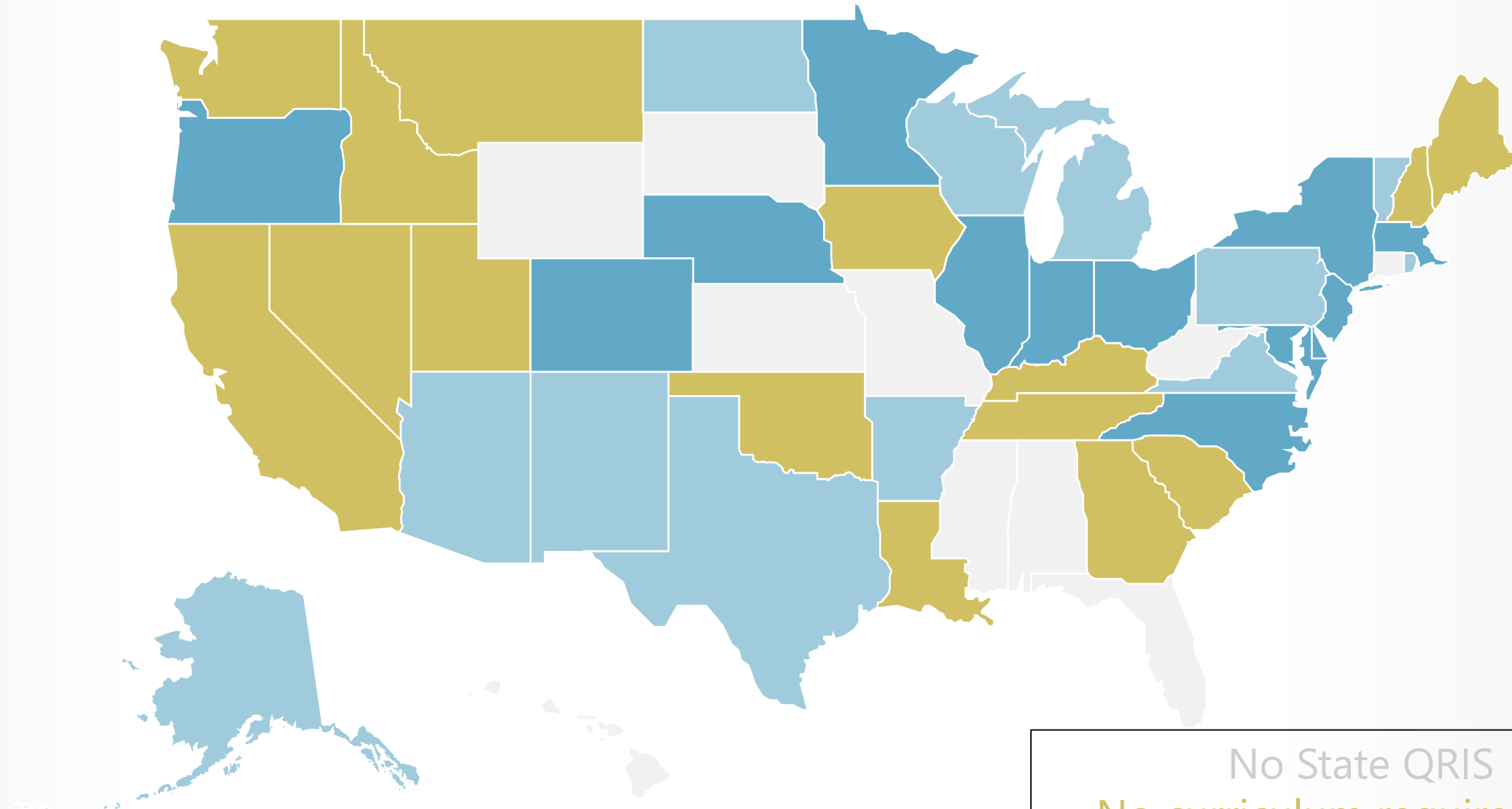


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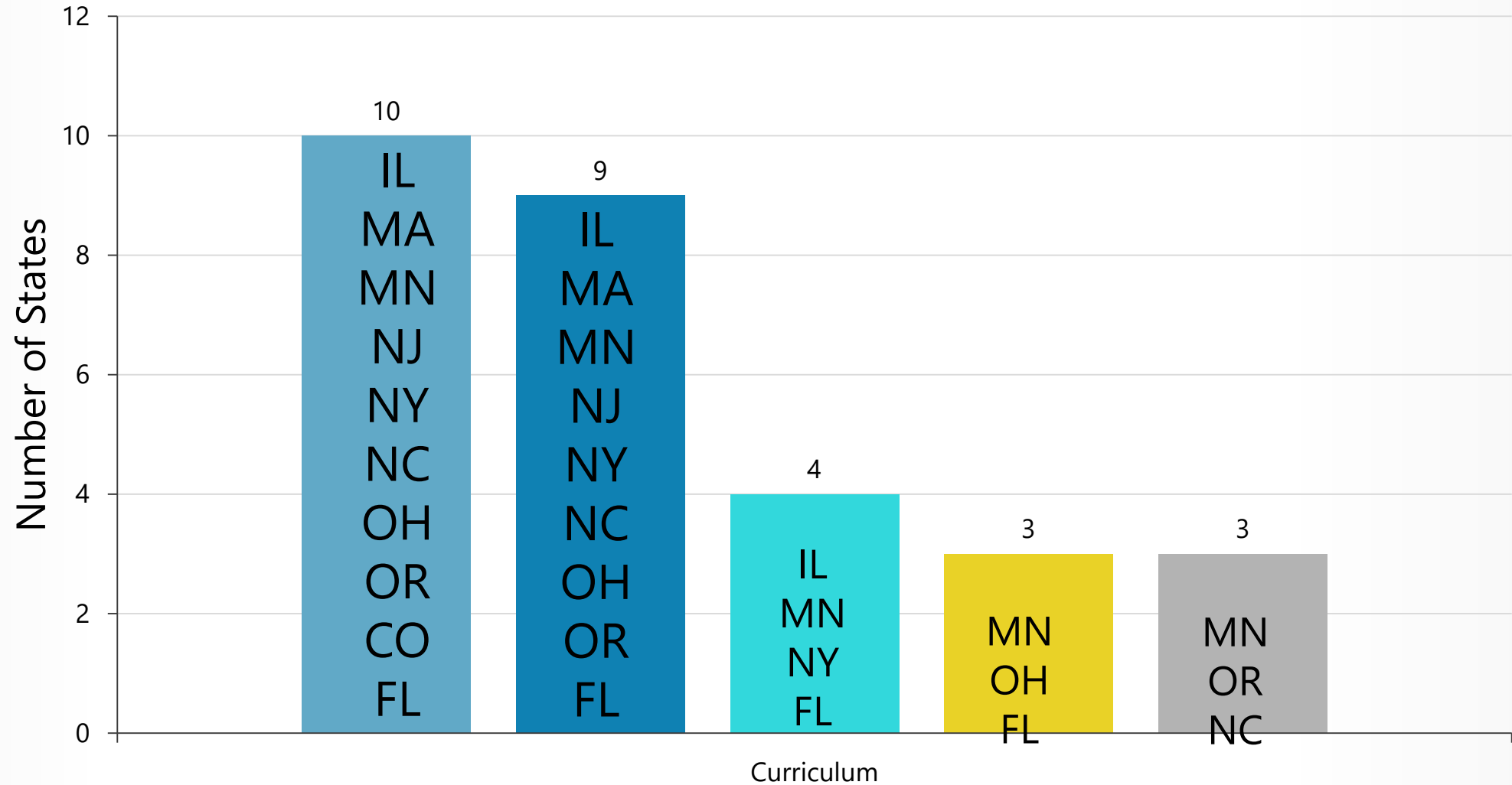


QRIS Curriculum Status for Preschool Programs



No State QRIS
No curriculum requirements
Curriculum Guidance
Specific Curriculum Listed

Curriculum Listed for QRIS - Preschool



■ Creative Curriculum

■ Montessori

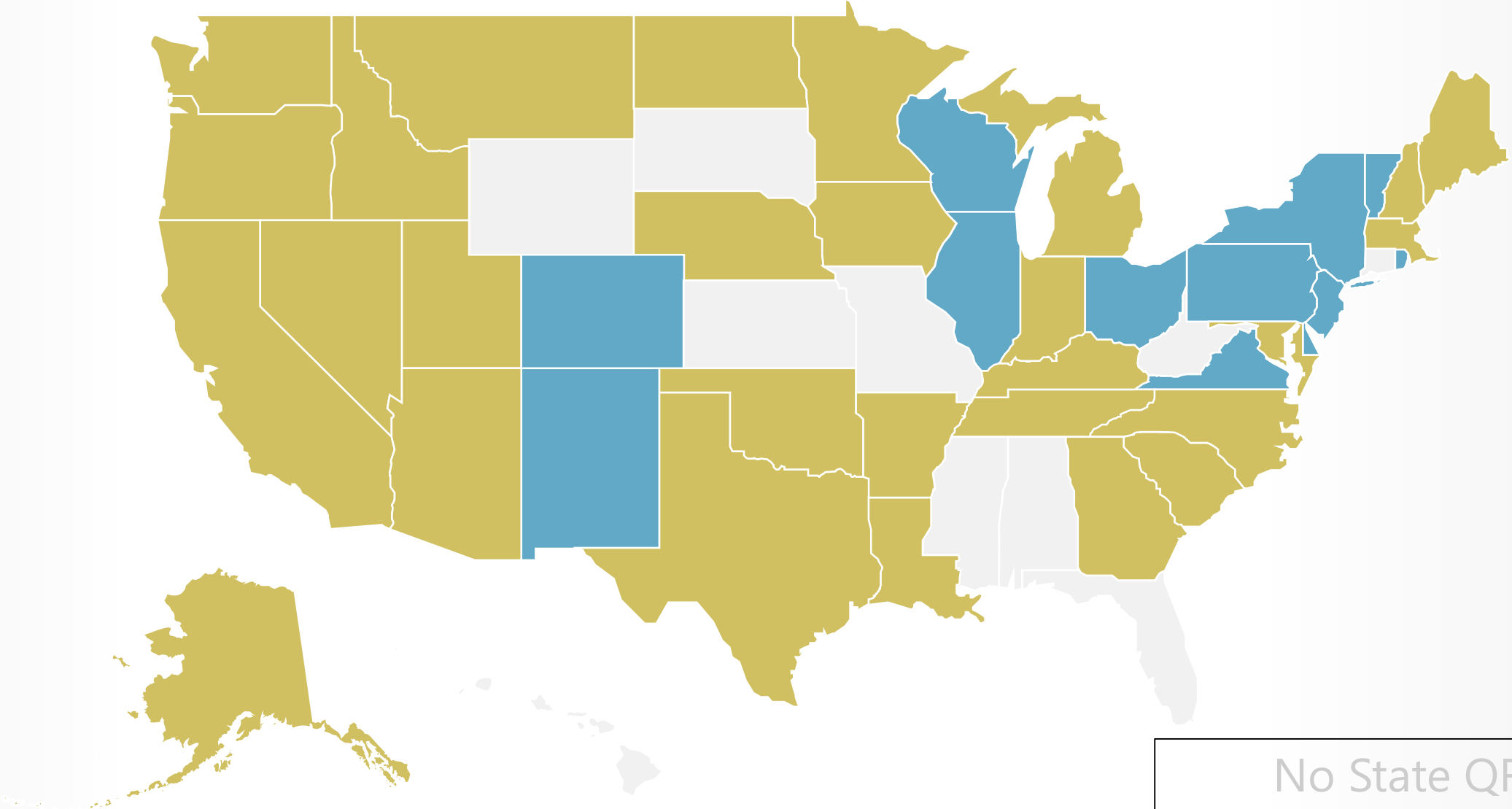
■ Opening the World of Learning (OWL)

■ High Scope

■ DLM Early Childhood Express



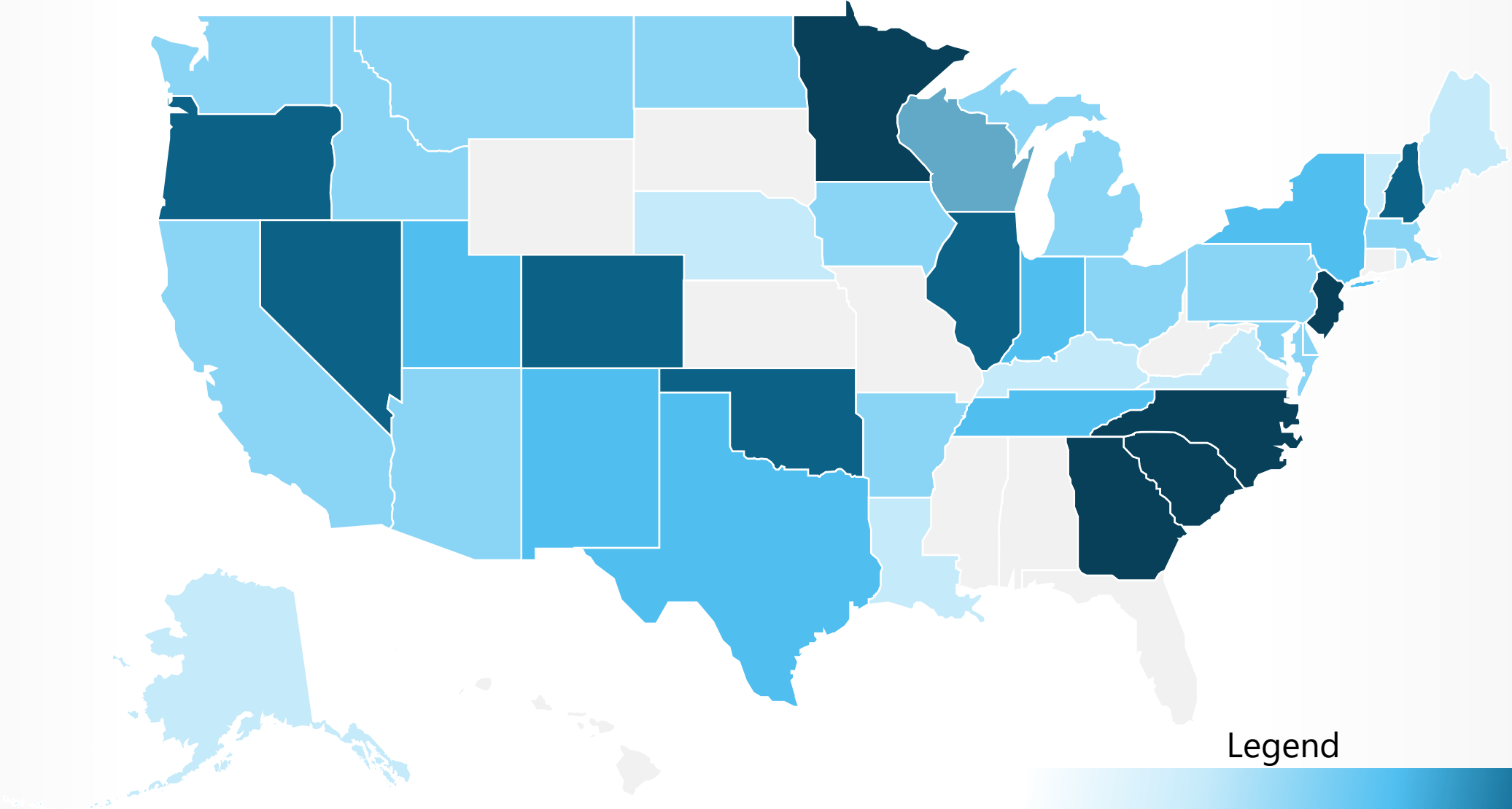
QRIS Early Learning Standards Alignment



No State QRIS
Do not mention
Aligned with Standards



Number of Managing Organizations & Partnerships in QRIS



Legend



1 Agency

9 or more Agencies



Types of Managing Organizations for QRIS



Note: States are not mutually exclusive because some states report more than one managing organization

Summary and Discussion

- Little evidence of alignment across ECE state systems
 - Different curricular requirements for pre-k and CCDF; limited guidance
 - Standards not incorporated into QRIS
 - Little evidence state policies are evidence-based
- Substantial dispersion in QRIS; ECE overall
 - Dispersion of ECE offices at state level not strongly correlated with dispersion of QRIS responsibilities ($r=.31$)
- Infant-toddler patterns look very similar, but more limited data

Discussion

- Why is state ECE policy not more aligned?
- What would alignment look like at the state or federal level?
- What is the best way to measure alignment?
- Are states aligned to the right things?

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Thank you!

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State ECE Agencies

