

The Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care in Rhode Island

2022 Retreat Report

Summary: This was the first bi-annual retreat held by the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care in Rhode Island (referred to in this report as “the Commission”) since before the pandemic. Participants came together to consider the purpose and objectives of the Commission, recent accomplishments and legislative successes, engage with state and federal policy makers, and establish goals for the next two legislative sessions.

Attendees: Participants included Commission members & regular participants, child care and early learning advocates, federal policy makers, and state elected officials.

- Osmay Barker, Barker Project Management
- Katie Neves, Barker Project Management
- Roberta Cicilline-DiMezza, Admin to Rep. Grace Diaz
- Amy Vogel, BOCA
- Julie Boutwell, Center for Early Learning Professionals
- Tiana Ochoa, Children's Friend
- Rachel Flum, Children's Friend
- Beth Lobdell, Connecting For Children and Families
- Nicole Chiello, Department of Human Services
- Divya Nair, Economic Progress Institute
- Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, Economic Progress Institute
- Beth Lobdell, Connecting for Children and Families
- Laura Zeisler, Family Child Care Homes of RI
- Jody SW Bernard, Genesis Early Learning Center
- Kayla Rosen, Governor's Office / Children's Cabinet
- Christine O'Connor, House Policy
- Kayla Arruda, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- Megan Ressler, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- Ramona Santos Torres, Parents Leading for Educational Equity
- Lori Wagner, Rhode Island Child Care Directors Association
- Leanne Barrett, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

- Charlie Clifford, RI Alliance of YMCAs
- Catherine Green, RI Head Start Collaboration Office, DHS
- Maria Fajardo, RI SEIU 1199 Union
- Nicole O'Loughlin, RI SEIU State Council
- Lisa Hildebrand, RIAEYC
- Zoe R. McGrath, RIDE
- Deborah Masland, RIPIN
- Grace Diaz, State Representative
- Mary Ann Shallcross Smith , State Representative
- Sandra Cano, State Senate
- Alana DiMario, State Senator
- Elijah McLean, United Way of Rhode Island
- Mary Varr, Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association, Inc.
- Charlotte Boudreau, Youth Development and Education Consultant

Speakers:

- U.S. Senator Jack Reed
- U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
- U.S. Congressman David Cicilline
- Governor Daniel McKee
- Lt. Governor Sabina Matos
- Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea
- House Majority Leader Chris Blazewski
- House Finance Chairman Marvin Abney
- Senate Finance Chairman Ryan Pearson

Part 1: Aligning & Connecting with Commission Members

Welcome Remarks

Retreat facilitators Osmary Barker and Katie Neves welcomed everyone, gave an overview of the retreat agenda, and addressed housekeeping and emergency preparedness considerations. They then led a brief icebreaker exercise for participants.

Setting Expectations

Commission Co-Chair Senator Alana DiMario welcomed everyone and set the tone for the retreat by inviting participants to take the day to come together around the opportunity to consider the Commission's goals for both their monthly meetings, and in relation to a roadmap for the work going forward.

Senator DiMario then reviewed the goals and objectives for the retreat.

- **To review the purpose and role of the Commission**, and how it is driven by the people who make up the Commission;
- **to discuss Commission membership**, and the vibrant and varied perspectives who participate in Commission conversations, and those voices that are still missing from the room and should be included;
- **to elevate advocate stories to state and federal policy makers** from folks who are seeking care and those who are providing care;
- **to work in small groups to discuss and identify possible legislative priorities on key topics** by bringing together expert and thought leader perspectives;
- **to leave the retreat with a road map for legislative asks** for the next two legislative sessions.

Commission Co-Chair Representative Grace Diaz gave a background on the history of the Commission, which was established in 1989, and recognized some of the longest-serving members of the Commission in attendance: Leanne Barrett, Charlotte Boudreau, Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith, and Laura Zeisler.

Rep. Diaz commended the support the Commission has built over time in the State Legislature, and reviewed the purpose and role of the Commission. She then went over the recently proposed resolution to clarify the group's purpose, name, and membership list, and why these changes will help the Commission's efforts. She explained that while H7675 passed the House in 2022 and a slightly different version passed the House in 2021, the Senate is not ready to pass the resolution because of concerns around Commission membership. Since Commission meetings are open to the public, a lot of people attend regularly and actual membership is difficult to determine.

Rep. Diaz recognized the challenges that the Commission faces regarding membership due the fact that it has the largest membership of any legislative Commission, and that many members of the General Assembly feel that the membership needs to be clarified.

She said that the process of clarifying and finalizing the Commission membership would take the following steps:

1. Dedicate one meeting to clarify membership. During this meeting, decide which agencies and leaders will sit on the Commission.
2. Determine the individuals who will represent each organization.
3. Send a recommendation with the full list of organizations and individuals to the Senate and House for approval.

She stressed that everyone on the Commission has to be onboard with the decisions made throughout this process, and thanked everyone for bringing their unique and valuable perspectives to the conversation.

Rep. Diaz then reviewed the Commission's recent legislative and budgetary successes.

Accomplishments related to child care include:

- Reduced and established a cap on family copayments for CCAP at the federal affordability standard.
- Increased family income limits to qualify and keep the CCAP subsidy.
- Established CCAP eligibility for low-income college students.
- Increased CCAP provider rates for all age groups.

Accomplishments related to early childhood workforce include:

- Authorized pandemic retention bonuses for child care and early learning program staff, expanded the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood program, and allocated funds for a child care educator registry.
- State required to develop and submit a plan to “prepare, recruit, and retain a highly qualified early childhood workforce, including adequate wages regardless of setting.”

Other recent accomplishments include:

- Expanded paid family leave from 4 weeks to 6 weeks.
- Secured a 45% Medicaid rate increase and APRA funds for Early Intervention to address a staffing crisis and waiting list.
- Secured a temporary rate increase for the First Connections program to prevent program closure.
- Requires a state plan to sustain and expand Pre-K to serve 5,000 children ages three and four within 5 years in a diverse delivery system while ensuring that infant and toddler programs are not at risk as Pre-K is expanded.

Sen. DiMario then led an interactive question and answer session with attendees to hone their strategies and tactics for effectively communicating with legislators to advance the Commission's priorities.

Part 2: Engaging Federal Policy Makers & State Elected Leaders

Update from Federal Policy Makers

Sen. DiMario welcomed U.S. Senator Reed, U.S. Senator Whitehouse, and U.S. Congressman Cicilline, thanked them for taking the time to attend the retreat, and prioritizing child care and early childhood education. She then introduced Beth Lobdell from Connecting for Children and Families to share her personal story with our Federal Leaders.

Beth Lobdell thanked the federal leaders for fighting for ARPA funding, and acknowledged how it had helped child care programs. She expressed disappointment that Build Back Better didn't pass since the funding would have provided some relief, and highlighted some of the current challenges providers are facing. She shared that Connecting for Children & Families currently has closed classrooms since they don't have enough qualified staff to work for those wages, and that many Rhode Island families are impacted since they can't secure the spots they need for their young children.

U.S. Senator Reed, U.S. Senator Whitehouse, and U.S. Congressman Cicilline all shared encouraging and supportive remarks, and congratulated the Commission for their success in raising awareness and advocating for child care and early education settings. All three expressed a clear understanding of how important it is to have a robust child care and early education delivery system in order to support the economy and keep parents working, and promised to keep fighting to bring more funding to support the industry, both in Rhode Island, and across the country.

Panel Discussion with Rhode Island State Elected Leaders

Rachel Flum thanked the Rhode Island state elected leaders in attendance, and invited them to the front of the room to engage in a panel discussion. To frame the conversation, she invited two childhood and early learning advocates to share their experiences with the elected leaders by giving an overview of some key legislative successes and ongoing Challenges. Nicole O'Laughlin, the RI SEIU State Council Director, and Leanne Barret, Senior Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, shared their experiences.

Rachel then moderated a lively conversation with the state elected leaders in attendance: Governor Daniel McKee, Lt. Governor Sabina Matos, Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea, House Majority Leader Chris Blazewski, House Finance Chairman Marvin Abney, and Senate Finance Chairman Ryan Pearson. She kicked off the panel by reminding them of the purpose of the Commission, and asking them to share either their personal priorities heading into this session, or their advice to members of the Commission. Here is a sampling of sentiments from the elected leaders who spoke.

“My number one goal as Governor is to raise people's incomes across the board. And the only way you can do that is by having an economy with low unemployment, having an economy that's growing, investing in spaces where that economy can grow. We do know that in order for people to get out and work, they need child care [...] If you expand the economy, then we're going to have a great deal more flexibility to pass budgets that can meet that need. And one of the main goals is that you're going to raise incomes for the people who work in our child cares. They need the ability to earn more money.” -**Governor McKee**

When asked by moderator Rachel Flum if there would be budget items around child care and early learning in his proposed budget in January, **Governor McKee** responded: “We're going to

go across the board. We are enjoying things coming out of the pandemic that we didn't have going into the pandemic, and that should reflect in all the investments we make that will grow the economy. And child care is going to help people [...] and child care is important to grow the economy. Because we need more people working."

"We have been talking a lot about the women that have left the workforce... and right now how we're going to get women back into the workforce. And many of the reasons why that happens is because we don't have access to affordable, reliable child care. So I'm looking forward to continuing to do work in this space to make sure that we have more options for parents, for working families, so women in that situation can find a reliable and affordable child care center with a schedule that meets her needs to go back to work." -**Lt. Governor Matos**

Lt. Gov. Matos referenced a recent visit to the College Unbound program: "They are helping teacher's assistants get their bachelor's degree and become teachers, that's going to help us a lot with the problems we're having with the lack of teachers right now. I would love to see more of that type of program being used in other industries, especially in the space of child care, to get the child care providers that want to get a bachelor's degree and be able to become a teacher or be able to become a professional in an area of this field. I'm looking forward to working with all of you to make this a reality." -**Lt. Governor Matos**

"I have family members, relatives, friends that are child care providers. It's long hours that they work. They open their home to families and they sacrifice a lot, and I understand the challenges that the home child care providers face, and I look forward to working with them to find solutions." -**Lt. Governor Matos**

"I remember when I had my first kid—I have three—and by the way they went to a home daycare that thankfully ended up getting unionized as part of that movement. I remember thinking: how has there not been a revolution? Because the pain that we put both parents and providers through to do something that everybody says is essential to the economy of the state, which is to nurture our next generation so that we can have a better state—It's unfathomable. [...] This whole conversation needs to be yes in the short run about raising incomes and quality of life issues and making sure that we have educational career tracks that respect the vocation, because it's a vocation. Just like earning a gazillion dollars is a vocation, taking care of children is a vocation that should be respected. We need a transformation in this state and in this country that says that the caregiving economy is just as important as any other sector of this economy. Whether you're building widgets or creating accounting services. It is an essential part of what we need to have in order to have a healthy economy and a healthy community." -**Secretary Gorbea**

Blazejewski referenced how as a part-time legislature, everyone draws on experiences from their everyday lives: "We all remember how it was during the pandemic, and how important it was to get our child care facilities up and running again. For our providers, thank you so much. My wife is a teacher, and she had to teach on Zoom while I was trying to do my law practice and help my constituents get through the pandemic while our two kids were at home. It was an

enormous challenge, and we all had a chance to see through the pandemic what it was like to not have child care services. And our economy simply can't function without strong child care services." **-House Majority Leader Blazewski**

"Because Chair Pearson and myself see hundreds of organizations, and scores that are actually very important to how we live. When we see people advocating for that, the one thing that's missing a lot of times is a story. I would just suggest that as a group, you fight it out among yourselves, but have a good story to tell at the end of the day because everybody wants money, no question. And they should. But not everybody is going to get what they want because we live in a democratic society and I've got 74 people other than myself to convince and Chairman Pearson has 37 to do the same thing [...] If you couch what you need in a story that the average person on the street could understand, because you've got to realize that [...] this is taxpayer money [...] that's how you get things done, if you have a good human story that transcends all of the rest." **-House Finance Chair Abney**

"Our economy depends on the availability of child care." **-Senate Finance Chair Pearson**

"It is going to take federal and state funding to meet the goals that we want. I know we spoke earlier about Build Back Better unfortunately not passing. That would have been absolutely transformational for early childhood learning across the country. [...] There's a lot more we can do on the state level, and I know that many of us are committed to do that, but to get to where I know we all want to go, we do need that federal support. Standing up wages for our educators more than they are today, is very, very expensive at scale. Expanding eligibility is very very expensive at scale. These sorts of things are going to require a state match and state pieces of it, but to get to where we want to go, we are going to need federal funding." **-Senate Finance Chair Pearson**

Part 3: State Budget & Legislative Priority Breakout Sessions

Retreat participants were divided into small groups which then rotated through six total breakout sessions facilitated by a retreat participant whose work relates to the topic area. The goal of these sessions was to introduce current state budget and legislative priority areas and allow participants the opportunity to share their experiences and expertise and weigh in on the best approaches to budgetary or legislative strategy.

After the breakout sessions, the full group came back together and top takeaways from each priority topic were presented to the group.

Breakout Session Topic: Child Care Assistance Program Improvement and Expansion

Facilitator: Amy Vogel, Business Owners of Childcare Association

Participants were given the following background information:

- The RI Child Care Assistance program rates for providers were increased for all ages of children (0-12) enrolled in centers to rates that range from the 50th percentile to the 80th percentile of the 2021 Market Rate Survey. Family child care rates are still being negotiated through collective bargaining.
- Family income limits to initially qualify for the RI Child Care Assistance Program were lifted from 180% FPL to 200% FPL, and the exit family income limit was raised from 225% FPL to 300% FPL. Family copayments were reduced and capped at 7% of family income in 2021. Eligibility was made permanent for low-income parents enrolled at RI public higher education institutions
- A proposal to remove the outdated requirement for families to establish paternity/parentage and participate in child support enforcement was not removed from the statute.
- Rhode Island spends \$48 million less on child care than we did in 2005, and many families who cannot afford child care do not qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program.

Key takeaways from session conversations (asterisks indicate top priorities):

1. **The requirement for families to take a paternity test and file for child support to be eligible for CCAP is outdated and should be eliminated.
2. **Base CCAP rates must be increased to at least the 75th percentile. Should increase overall DHS CCAP rates for infant, toddler, preschool, and school age. (Since family child care providers are part of a union, they'd need to establish new rates through their own negotiations.)
3. **Must increase family eligibility (FPL or federal poverty level) so that more families qualify for CCAP subsidy to cover child care costs, and increase the cliff so families are not left suddenly unable to afford care if they earn a little more income.
4. Infant rate bonus - infants and toddlers are currently the same rate, and while that should stay the same, providers taking infants should get an additional \$25/week.
5. Need to consider changes to child care provider wage strategies.
6. Rate parity between family child care providers and centers (note: this was a perspective from a family provider).
7. Providers should be paid based on enrollment rather than attendance. During COVID this was allowed, and it should be reinstated.
8. When families utilize family leave (TCI/TDI) and maternity leave, they should be able to keep their CCAP spot. Currently, if they're up for renewal while on leave, they won't have pay stubs so could lose their CCAP, have to reapply, and ultimately lose their spot.
9. Eligibility should be increased from 12 to 18 months.
10. Diagnosed-need insurance rate money. Recommendation that if you have a special health care need, insurance should pay an additional amount for care to a child care program. Hopefully this would keep children in consistent care settings and provide stability for children and families.

Breakout Session Topic: RI Pre-K & Head Start expansion in mixed delivery system

Facilitator: Mary Varr, RI Head Start Association

Participants were given the following background information:

- Funding for 800 RI Pre-K seats will expire at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Currently, we have 2,300 seats. New state or federal funding is needed to maintain access. Rhode Island currently spends \$14.9 million per year in state general revenue on RI Pre-K.
- The state currently funds 130 Head Start seats for three- and four-year-olds statewide at \$1.4 million, down from 400 seats prior to cuts in 2008. The federal government funds 2,462 Head Start seats for three- and four-year-olds in the state with \$35 million.
- RIDE, DHS, and the Children's Cabinet are preparing a plan to expand access to Pre-K to serve 5,000 children ages three and four and to estimate the resources needed to provide universal pre-K statewide.

Key takeaways from session conversations (asterisks indicate top priorities):

1. ****Sustain current numbers of Pre-K slots in the budget, including those that are federally funded.**
2. ****Expand blended funding models and restore state funding for Head Start so programs can increase wages for early educators to meet public school salaries.**
3. ****Compensation parity with public schools -Create a funding formula that pays early childhood educators with degrees equal to public school teachers.**
4. Include family child care in Pre-k expansion.
5. Benchmark for infant/toddler funding to 33%. As state general revenue increases for preschool, the state should be required to allocate at least 33% of the new preschool funding to directly support access to high-quality infant/toddler learning programs (specifically, high-quality child care, Early Head Start, family home visiting, and Early Intervention).
6. Three-year-olds should be included in pre-k.
7. There is a geographic issue on placement and equitable access for children with disabilities, which impacts children with IEPs. LEA representatives currently do not cross town or city lines to provide support, and this needs to be changed.
8. Multi-language - need more options.
9. State ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) plan-how does this plan support LEAs, Pre-K, Head Start and Child Care Programs working collaboratively to improve early childhood education for children?
10. Need to tell the story about the challenging road to pre-k.
11. Administrative course with financial incentive - child care directors don't have adequate professional development opportunities to prepare to run all aspects of centers (fiscally, facilities, etc.). If courses were offered and directors could get a stipend for participating, it would improve registrations.

Breakout Session Topic: Paid Family Leave

Facilitator: Divya Nair, Economic Progress Institute

Participants were given the following background information:

- Rhode Island launched our paid family leave program (Temporary Caregivers Insurance) in 2014. We are now one of 11 states plus the District of Columbia that have a statewide paid family leave program. Rhode Island's program is funded entirely with employee contributions as part of our Temporary Disability Insurance Program.
- At approximately 60% of wages, our paid family leave program has the lowest wage replacement rate compared to any other state, creating challenges for low-wage workers to be able to take the leave when they need it.
- Our paid family leave program offers the lowest number of weeks compared to any other state. Both Massachusetts and Connecticut offer 12 weeks. TCI currently offers 5 weeks of leave to new parents and workers who need to take time off to care for a seriously ill family member. In January 2023, the program will expand to 6 weeks as required under a law passed in 2021.

Key takeaways from session conversations (asterisks indicate top priorities):

1. ****Wage replacement is currently inequitable. Increase wage reimbursement by increasing the contribution wage cap (currently completely employee funded from 1.1% income withholding with a contribution cap at \$81,500 of annual earnings); recommend a tiered wage replacement system that allows for lower-income families to access TCI and by increasing wage replacement for lower-income earners to 90-100% (currently 60%, with the income cap at \$81,500)**
2. ****TCI (temporary income support) - should expand to 12 weeks (it will only be six weeks in January 2023), and a health equity lens should be the basis for this expansion. For mothers, it's important for healing and bonding time. There also needs to be public education on the ability to take TCI when caring for a family member. Should also be collecting more research and personal stories around COVID impacts to tell the story of why TCI needs to expand.**
3. **Expand definition of "family" for TCI to match the Rhode Island Paid Sick Days family definition, which includes grandchildren, siblings, and care recipients. The term "care recipients" allows for individuals to have more autonomy and flexibility when accessing TCI for caregiving purposes.**
4. ****Community engagement & education:**
 - a. **Ensure that access is available through multilingual resources and translation services.**
 - b. **Around TCI for caregivers (not just expecting parents)**
 - c. **Around TCI for kinship and foster care.**
5. **Self-employed, working/students, state workers (often bc of union contracts) are excluded from TCI.**
6. **Immigration status - documentation for undocumented.**

7. Coordinate with DLT - streamline access (kinship and foster care) and reimbursement timeline (reimbursement specifically for TDI). Since the process to get your checks takes so long, people sometimes end up just going back to work since they can't wait to be paid.
8. Keeping kids' slots in child care when a parent takes TCI. While the parent may be home taking care of a newborn child, their other children who are in childcare centers may lose access due to absence policy.
9. Include child development (importance of bonding with parents during first 12 weeks of life) and workforce retention (allow child to retain slot while parent takes TCI so the parent is able to return to work therefore keeping women in the workforce) in the narrative when discussing the need to expand TCI.

Breakout Session Topic: Early Care & Education Staffing Crisis

Facilitator: Lisa Hildebrand, RI Association for the Education of Young Children

Participants were given the following background information:

- Early childhood programs across the state are experiencing a severe staffing crisis with a waiting list for Early Intervention and many classrooms closed because programs cannot attract and retain qualified staff with current resources.
- Staff compensation varies tremendously depending on funding source which results in variable quality and turnover challenges as qualified and effective staff move to higher paying jobs. RI Pre-K teachers in public schools are paid \$87,000/year; RI Pre-K teachers in community-based classrooms are paid \$62,000/year; RI Head Start teachers are paid \$41,000/year; preschool teachers are paid \$35,000/year; and child care educators are paid \$29,000/year on average.
- The RI Early Educator Investment Act was passed by the Senate but not the House. This would require the state to establish goals to pay equitable and competitive wages across the early childhood system and to establish a permanent progressive wage supplement program, like Child Care WAGE\$.
- In 2022, legislation passed that requires a state plan to prepare, recruit, and retain a highly qualified early childhood workforce, including "adequate wages for early childhood educators regardless of setting."
- ARPA funding was authorized to provide two years of pandemic staff retention bonuses (\$3,000/year) for educators and direct care staff at licensed child care centers and family child care homes, to expand the RI's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood workforce development model to help more early educators earn post-secondary credentials and degrees, and to develop an early educator workforce registry.

Key takeaways from session conversations (asterisks indicate top priorities):

1. **Continue to work on increasing CCAP rates. Important to separate out infant and toddler rates and make the infant rate significantly higher than toddler rate, while increasing both.
2. Engage the business community to help solve the staffing issue. Reach out to HR departments in large businesses/Chambers of Commerce. Provide tax incentives to businesses who provide child care stipends to families who work for them.
3. **Increase Wages!!
4. **Categorical eligibility for CCAP for all child care teachers!
5. Increase the number of people and resources to support teaching staff in programs. Add extra mental health staff/social workers/wrap around supports (HS model) so that the teachers are not solely responsible for behavior in their classrooms.
6. Pass the Early Educator Investment Act and create goals for wages.
7. Proper environments and facilities will keep good teachers in programs.
8. Promote benefits of the job rather than the deficits. Lead with the positives to recruit people into the field.
9. Coordinate pathways - immigrants (sponsorships), CTE for high school students, pathways for older ages/career changers, other non-traditional ages?
10. **Benefits for staff - could child care workers get on the state pension and benefit plan?
11. Housing money - could we tap into the new affordable housing funding?
12. Student loan forgiveness - could be automatic for all child care teachers, not just those in non-profits?
13. Apprenticeships - robust, well-funded models that allow for advancement and salary increases.

Breakout Session Topic: Out-of-School Time programs for ages 5 and up

Facilitator: Elijah McLean, United Way of RI

Participants were given the following background information:

- The school-age rates for center-based programs accepting children in the RI Child Care Assistance Program were increased and tiered to promote quality improvement. Approximately 40% of children receiving CCAP subsidy are children ages 6-12.
- Legislation has not passed that would establish a dedicated funding stream to support high-quality afterschool, summer learning, and youth development programs. For every child enrolled in an afterschool, summer learning, and youth development program, 3 children are without program opportunities.
- The RI Afterschool Network recommends the state fund a new role positioned within the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), entitled the Director of Out of School Time (OST) Programming.

Key takeaways from session conversations (asterisks indicate top priorities):

1. **Major confusion around licensing and language

2. **Expanding CCAP age - it must support all ages of kids/the whole family. There are very limited seats available for a large demand for school-age kids, and parents are not being fully supported.
3. **Messaging/advocacy/re-branding changes to frame OST as a crucial component of child care that supports families. Although investments in child care are expanding in most other areas (funding, transportation, staffing, workforce development) as is desperately needed, OST is not usually included in these expansion conversations.
4. **Conflicts for regulations - redefining (DHS partnership)
5. Raise the FTE (full time employee) cap (the RIDE involvement in the funded portion of licensing costs).
6. State departments must work together to understand and validate the OST space. Families are not being supported comprehensively and equitably. Harder for kids who are not into sports, or live in rural areas. They especially need more OST opportunities.
7. There's potential for governance committees - need committees to support work around the state. Don't currently have the reach of RIDE. Looking for them to support more of that work where applicable. to use CCAP resources for RIDE to support network (child care, pre-k)
8. Standard curriculum
9. Culturally & linguistically diverse programs
10. Challenges with dedicated state funding
11. Must be more coordination between child care & OST
12. Issue with procurement process, which is a question of equity and access. State processes favor larger orgs who have more data sharing opportunities, partnerships, and other advantages. Since they have the upper hand, smaller orgs miss out. How do we determine who the most deserving orgs really are?
13. OST programs don't have the same advocacy as child care. Need to build a coalition to advocate.
14. RIDE only funding 21st century learning programs. Miss out on funding pool.
15. Workforce development & staffing crisis - no direct pathways for young adults, no strong apprenticeship opportunities. Orgs like Rhode Island College are working to offer more pathways to become licensed providers and educators. Want to expand on those things.
16. **Licensing (DHS) challenges to physical operation. There is a group of orgs that are not licensed intentionally. Equity challenges exist for a small business who would like to work with RIDE. There are high quality programs not licensed through RIDE that are still doing great work. If they were able to get licensed, they'd have technical support and advantages.
17. **So many types of OST programs - need to better define OST programs.

Breakout Session Topic: Services and Access for Children with Developmental Delays, Disabilities, and Mental Health Challenges

Facilitator: Deb Masland, Rhode Island Parent Information Network

Participants were given the following background information:

- Under the legislative authority, the state is moving forward with a 45% Medicaid rate increase for Early Intervention and providing ARPA funding. There is a staffing crisis in Early Intervention, and there are currently 800 infants and toddlers with developmental challenges on the waiting list for Early Intervention, a program required under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and funded through Medicaid and private health insurance.
- The Infant-Early Childhood Mental Wellness Act was passed in 2022 and requires EOHHS to develop a Medicaid plan to promote the adoption of best practices in screening, evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health challenges for children under age 6.
- The KIDS CONNECT program, managed by EOHHS, has not been updated in many years. KIDS CONNECT is a program funded by Medicaid that provides specialized services at licensed child care centers and after-school programs for children enrolled in Medicaid who have special health care needs so that they can fully participate in classroom daily routines, activities, and learning opportunities.

Key takeaways from session conversations (asterisks indicate top priorities):

1. Need to connect the silos
 2. **Workforce/EI/Kids Connect needs to be redesigned
 3. **Compensation parity across all EC (early childhood?) systems
 4. Providers who speak child/family language and culture
 5. 45% EI Medicaid rate increase is not enough and should be raised to 70%. We asked for this increase in a recent bill and it did not come to fruition.
 6. Pipeline needed - high school/college
 7. E.D. families regarding milestones
 8. **Better support in child's existing child care setting when exiting EI
 9. More full-day programs for children who need it
 10. **More support for pre-K to support children who are not able to access EI
 - a. Retention/ incentive policies
 11. EI to be in compliance with federal/state timelines
 12. EI to continue until child starts pre-k
 13. System connection
 14. Transition from Providence Center/Bradley, etc.
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Retreat Evaluation

Attendees completed a retreat evaluation at the end of the program. Here is feedback from that evaluation, in respondents' own words.

Q: What part of the retreat did you like the most?

- Small group discussions and all the federal and state leaders
- The words of the guests and they were sure that we need better education for our children
- Round tables were great! Having the elected officials here but they should listen to us more and us listen to them less
- Connecting with my *[text not legible]*. New to my position so I appreciated getting to know what others are doing to meet the demands of our programs and *[text not legible]*
- Legislator participation and *[text not legible]* small group conversations
- Very well organized - appreciate the attention to detail
- Break up groups - great format
- Break up conversations
- Working in groups – sharing ideas
- It was one of the most interesting I've been to. Amazing that we had all the politicians who attended and to hear their perspective
- Connecting and sharing ideas
- How welcomed I was as a person who works for DHS
- Presentations done to inform legislators - legislators including federal level - smooth organization of brainstorming summaries - refreshments/food excellent
- Breakout sessions
- Working with other professionals towards the same goals
- The afternoon diving into challenges and solutions
- The interactions at the tables and during breakout sessions. it was *[text not legible]* tomorrow to see so many of our Rhode Island legislators

Q: Which part of the retreat did you like the least? Why?

- A lot of information! Longer lunch :)
- All in one room – little movement
- The pace was a little intense
- The piece was a little intense
- Could have used a longer lunch time :)
- Just need microphones for speakers for a better hearing
- Longer pace for groups - longer lunch! :-)
- It was sometimes hard to hear speakers

Q: What would you have changed about today's retreat?

- Nothing
- Microphones needed - simultaneous interpretation

- See above – I love that they were here – we need to tell them more stories!
- Factsheet about small group info for followers not familiar on topics
- More time for general networking
- Breakouts given our own spaces to break up day with more movement
- Nothing!
- Microphones for panel and table (federal/state delegation)
- Great work, wouldn't change
- Nothing – great day. Good use of time.

Q: What should we keep doing?

- Engage this big group – the more the better
- Engaging
- Loved the catering!
- Food 10/10 - topic focused discussions
- Working on our goals and aligning systems
- Great work!
- Everything :-)
- All!
- Great job :-)
- Everything
- Let's not put all of this great info shared on a shelf lets together come up with solutions.
Great retreat thank you
- The way this retreat was set up and run was perfect - keep doing it!

2022 Retreat Resources

- [Retreat agenda](#)
- [Retreat run of show](#)
- [Retreat PowerPoint presentation](#)
- [Child Care Commission Enacted Resolutions History](#) - Original language as determined by the 1989 resolution
- Recent [proposed changes](#) to clarify the Commission's purpose
- [H7675 House Resolution to Update Child Care Commission](#) - to clarify purpose/name and update membership
- [Folder with notes](#) from retreat breakout sessions
- Archive of [photos & videos from the retreat](#)
- Earned media:
 - [Capital TV segment](#)
 - *ABC 6 news crew was in attendance. Unknown whether there was ever coverage.*