

The Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care in Rhode Island Meeting Minutes August 16, 2010

Attendees:

Representative Grace Diaz
Alex Arnold
Bonnie Larson
Channavy Chhay
Charlotte Boudreau
Heidi Flynn
Larry Pucciarelli
Colleen Dorian for Laura Mason Zeisler
Leslie Gell
Lynda Dickinson
Michele Palermo
Pam Hall
Paul Harden
Tammy Camillo
Tanitza Clavell
Lisa Furtado

Minutes:

The minutes from the July 12, 2010 were approved.

An invitation to visit the Child Care Commission was extended to Representative Melo and Senator DiPalma for the September meeting. It is believed that Representative Melo will become the next Finance Chairman, that's what Representative Diaz is hearing. We want the commission to be connected to him. We want him to have an opportunity to learn about the Child Care Commission.

Representative Diaz asked Paul Harden to reintroduce himself to the commission. He is from Rhode Island Economic Development. He manages the Workforce Development Programs.

Representative Diaz introduced Aria Rosa, she was Representative Diaz's teacher.

Colleen Dorian introduced herself. She is the President of Family Childcare Homes of RI.

Invitations were sent to the Senate side to visit the Child Care Commission. We have heard that Senator DiPalma will be attending the September meeting. There needs to be a meeting to organize the presentation that we want to make to the General Assembly. We did this in the past when we met with Senator Reed, Senator Whitehouse, and other members of the General Assembly, but we need to continue until we have the majority of the members well connected to the Child Care Commission. This should be one of our goals until the next retreat. We approved during the retreat to keep the Legislator's informed and connected. Representative Diaz asked if there were any members interested in helping coordinate the visit. A member offered to bring copies of the report of the study of child care quality that was done on centers and pre-schools that show the classroom environment rating scale and the qualification of the teachers and give that data to the Representatives and Senators.

Larry Pucciarelli from DHS was asked if he could provide DHS information for the Child Care meeting in September with General Assembly members.

Heidi, from the Poverty Institute will address the numbers on the Rhode Island standard of need and how child care is part of the whole budget for a family.

Representative Diaz will contact Ready to Learn in Providence to see if they will also provide something for the meeting in September.

Representative Diaz thought The Department of Health can give a brief explanation what we have accomplished with the Pilot Program.

We will coordinate an agenda for the September meeting. The main purpose of the meeting is the presentation to the Legislator's. There are two confirmed for the September meeting. We will try to get more Representatives and Senators to attend the September meeting.

Representative Diaz asked the membership what they thought needed to be addressed before the end of the year. Representative Diaz would like to review some of the things that were discussed at the retreat. She said that there are a few things pending. She will send the pending items to the members before the September meeting. A priority list can be set for the next three meetings.

Heidi Collins suggested since there is a gubernatorial race this year that the Commission or an organization put together a child care history, setting the stage for the importance of child care as an industry. Further investments within the state budget for this industry. It was asked if Kids Count is working on a child care issue that could be sent to candidates. Representative Diaz was not sure if only a PAC could do this. As a legislative commission she didn't know if we would be allowed to do that. Representative Diaz will

find out. Representative Diaz said it's a good idea, but she needs to check the law. This would need to be done before November.

Shawn Simmons, the intern for the Child Care Commission, demonstrated how the website will look on a screen. The website can be viewed in 5 languages; English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Chinese, and Lao. You would just have click on the flag/name that you wanted to use. The main page has six tabs; for parents, for child care providers, child care listings, resources and publications, commission information and useful links. You will be able to link into all the agencies directly from this web-site. Useful links has the collage of all the agencies associated with child care. Data will put any information they get from the commission on the website. The website is www.rilin.state.ri.us, go to "special reports" on the top bar, then scroll down and go to the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care in RI. Shawn asked that it be moved so that the public can find the website for the commission but data said it needs to stay where it is under "special reports". A pamphlet will go to agencies and child care facilities so that they can inform staff and parents about the resources the website has to offer. Representative Diaz thanked Kids Count for their help with funding Shawn's work on the website. Representative asked if there was any other agency that would like to help with about \$200.00 more, to let her know. Representative Diaz praises Shawn's development of the website.

During the agency reporting session, Heidi from The Poverty Institute, spoke about the Guide to Government Assistance Program. The program is now live on the Poverty Institute website. You can search as providers or parents by population or by program. It has a summary sheet of all the programs, interactive tool. The pages will be updated as regularly as the programs change weather for the good or the bad. In addition they are asking folks to sign up on the Poverty Institutes Guide to Government Assistance Poverty News because as they make those changes to different programs alerts are sent to providers. You'll get announcements that changes have been made and you won't have to keep going back checking on it. This has been promoted not only to social service providers, but to churches, the business community, government agencies, it's pretty wide spread. 6000 postcards were sent out statewide.

Paul Harden asked if anyone had questions about 38 Studio's financing deal, Curt Shillings Company. He said there is a lot of misunderstanding about the deal. It's a video game production company; Shilling owns the company and approached Rhode Island about moving his operation to RI. They would also move another company they own based in Baltimore to Providence. The State is guaranteeing the 78 million dollar loan made by Wells Fargo Bank. The State is not giving him the money, it's not a grant. It's a loan he's making. If 38 Studio's could not pay the loan the State would be responsible for the State would be responsible. There is a debt service reserve set up that would cover a portion of that. Out of the 75 million there only getting 65 million, the rest goes into the reserve, to cover payments that the company would default on. The goal is to bring jobs to RI. In the next couple of years about 250 jobs here in Providence. The loan is set up for certain bench marks not just job creation but other performance bench marks.

Schilling would get payments based on those bench marks. The job creation is part of those bench marks. It's not a done deal yet, but it's moving down that track. As far as Mr. Harden knows they are not going to have a seat on the board. Personally he's not sure they should. It was proposed and reviewed by RI Economic Development board and people understand the business looked at it and said this makes sense. It's the first time the group has had a program that can help provide financing for company's that don't have buildings and equipment. Looking at where the new economy is going it's a lot less tangible in terms of products and equipment. Paperwork and legal documents are being worked on. They are hearing that they will start moving people here in January. The company wants to be in Providence, but there are other city's in Rhode Island reaching out to them. They have a young workforce that wants to be in an urban area. You would need to be skilled in video gaming for a job, skilled jobs. Some will relocate here and others will be hired once set up here. The legislator did there part when they approved the funding structure last year. This will generate a lot of interest in other company's in and out of state. There is another 50 million available for other loan guarantees. If a RI Company wanted to expand or an outside company wanted to move their company to RI. It has generated a lot of press about RI. The real challenge is as we move forward in the economy people are going to need higher skills in the workforce. Representative Diaz said we need to provide more schooling and skills for people so that they are qualified for jobs. She stated that we don't always benefit Rhode Islanders when we don't have people with the skills for the jobs. The games from 38 Studio's will be in the market very quickly. It's a new industry. 38 Studio's has a team that's done it before and has been around the industry. There is console and online gaming. There is a worldwide base of consumers. It generates millions of players and in turn revenue. RISD was a big attraction for 38 Studio's. A one page fact sheet about 38 Studio's will be sent to Roberta so that she can distribute to the commission members.

Michelle, Larry and Gabriella went to Washington. Gabriella went for the State Administrator's of the Child Care Program, Michelle represented the Department of Education and Larry represented Head Start. There were four conferences going on at the same time all on the issues of child care, early childhood education, and so on. They each had their own conferences but had some common sessions. They heard from high level administrators about goals and purposes of what they are doing. The entire industry is affected not just the subsidies. Lot of interest in Bright Stars and in evaluation, along with professional development.

DHS has been funding a number of projects. Bright Stars will be leading, The Rhode Island Child Care Resource Center, which will be the child care resource and referral agency for parents to call to receive information about finding quality child care as well as managing the states professional development effort. The two partners are RI AUS is the lead agency and two identified sub contractors and EDC (Educational Development Corporation) office in RI, but based out of Newton, MA.

DHS has been working on a child care website for enrollment. There will be automated enrollment. Providers will have to change their passwords. Updates will be on website.

An email generated change would help providers from visiting the site daily-----that will be taken up at a status meeting. DHS knows who's in your center, they send you the attendance sheet, some would like an email sent to provider about change in status. Provider just wanted to know when the administrator made a change to the website. This will be discussed personally by all that are concerned about the DHS website. There is a phone system for DHS for those without computer access. There are trainings for use. Representative Diaz said that she's found that people prefer a letter of change so that they have a copy.

Early Learning Council submitted their application to Washington. For the first application RI was eligible for \$500,000 (total) over the course of three years. The supplemental is up to an additional \$200,000 over the course of three years. It's not new money, just more money for those things you already proposed, here's what you'll do with the extra money. The final application is on the Kids Count website. The draft was there, but it is believed that the final is there now. It is a match with State dollars.

There is a handout from the Department of Health, regarding a meeting to gather child care providers for their input about the Child Care Health Consultant Training. Representative Diaz recommends attending, September 10th, 2:30p.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Department of Administration Conference Room A.

Larry mentioned that there were a number of work shops at the Early Childhood 2010 conference that was in Washington that has been previously mentioned. One that he stumbled into was Family Friend, & Neighbor Care. As you know in the Child Care Block Grant there is a requirement that there be a broad range of choices for parents who need child care, which can include unregulated child care. How do we reach families that provide that kind of care? Very difficult, not plugged into the system. Larry thought we should probably have someone from Illinois come talk to us about their strategies. They seem to be home based, home visited. It's hard to reach them, they are afraid. The other workshop was about compensation. Very troubling. Message was, early childhood needs to be seen as important as anything else in the education system.

Representative Diaz wants to meet before the next meeting to discuss the visitors for next month's meeting from House Finance and the Senate. She wants to work on a presentation.

Motion to adjourn.

