

PERMANENT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON CHILD CARE IN RI  
NOVEMBER 9, 2009

ATTENDANCE:

Representative Diaz  
Representative Savage  
Representative Mattiello  
Representative Almeida  
Senator Crowley  
Vladimir Ibarra  
Mike Burk  
Aimee Mitchell  
Channavy Chhay  
Leanne Barrett  
Paul Harden  
Bonnie Larson  
Pam Hall  
Susan Libutti  
Heidi Flynn  
Karen Beese  
Stefanie Coia  
Belkis Santana  
Laura Mason Zeisler  
Joseph Morra  
Bridget Giblin (student from RI College)  
Jackie Bishop (student from RI College)  
*Heidi Collins*  
*Charlotte Boudreau*

MINUTES:

Laura Mason Zeisler asked that there be changes made to the September 14, 2009 meeting minutes. The changes are on page two in the first paragraph. The first three lines have word changes; Family child care homes will be required to have building inspections along with a certificate of occupancy. At the next renewal they all have to produce a certificate of occupancy. They all will have to have a certificate of compliance.

Minutes were approved by the membership.

Representative welcomed members and Vice Chair Crowley.

Representative Diaz thanked all those who attended the retreat on October 29, 2009. We accomplished a lot. The retreat report is being worked on and will be available soon. It was learned at the retreat that the Commission needs to invite members of the General Assembly to commission meetings to build relationships with some members of the House. This would give the commission an opportunity to present what the commission does for the child care business in Rhode Island.

Representative Silva should be here soon. Representative Martin has offered to help with the child care web-site. He couldn't be here today; he had another meeting that he had to attend. Representative Diaz welcomed Representative Mattiello, representing District 15, Cranston and Representative Almeida representing District 12, Providence. Both are members of the Finance Committee.

Representative Diaz introduced Representative Mattiello. He graduated from Boston University and is an attorney. He was elected in 2006. Representative Mattiello said he was happy to attend and learn about the different issues and to have an opportunity to participate in a child care meeting.

Senator Crowley introduced Representative Almeida, who represents District 12 of Providence. He is the Deputy Majority Leader; he's on the House Committee on Finance, and on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. He went to LaSalle Academy and graduated from Roger Williams College. He's a financial strategist.

Representative Diaz told the group that today you will find out how and why we need to pay attention to child care in Rhode Island.

Leanne Barrett from Kids count welcomed the Representatives to the Commission meeting. Leanne mentioned that she has been attending child care meetings since 2000, and Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Leanne's boss at Kids Count has been attending since the mid 90's. The commission dates back to the 70's. There were some ad hoc groups that worked on child care

issues. Nationally there was a lot more attention to child care, employers were trying to figure out how to retain women smart, educated women who left to have children and didn't return to work. In the 90's there was welfare reform and the Family Independence Act in Rhode Island. The efforts were to move families off cash assistance and transition them to work and it put more money into child care. The spending on child care went up and we made our expansions to the Starting Right legislation in 1998 to expand child care up to 225% of poverty. Quality care was the goal. In the 2000's we have seen a big drop in funding for child care. Kids have lost access. Since the 70's there are three things we really care about; (1) access, connected to (2) affordability, (3) quality, we know high quality child care is good for kids. If we are going to make an investment of state resources be sure kids are actually benefiting from it, that it's not just babysitting. That is high quality educational care that helps kids, helps close the achievement gap and gets them ready for school.

Heidi Collins from the Poverty Institute was introduced by Representative Savage. Heidi is the Director of Public Education. Heidi focused her remarks on a study the Poverty Institute does called the Rhode Island Standard of Need. It shows how child care is impacting working families. Heidi handed out copies of the study to the Representatives. The Poverty Institute has copies on their web-site. The study is about what it costs to live in Rhode Island and how Federal and State work support programs help working families meet their basic needs. The report demonstrates how families fall short each month meeting those basic needs; food, rent, child care, transportation, especially when they lose access to child care or health care assistance. When child care assistance is allowed at the current rate of 180% of the Federal poverty level. If you have a single parent working twice the minimum wage, that's \$14.81 an hour receiving child care subsidies, but the minute that single parent who is getting a child care subsidy from the State gets an increase in their pay of .84 (cents) it puts them over the income eligibility, which is currently set at 180% of the poverty level. For those families just taking an extra .84 (cents) an hour could be the difference of whether or not they are economically moving up the ladder in employment. As families move up the ladder economically they can't afford the out of pocket for child care. Families that are at 175% of the Federal poverty level are paying \$205.00 a month for two children, once they make that .84 (cents) an hour, then they may have to pay \$1300.00 a month for child care for two children, because they lose their child care subsidy. Prior to this change in eligibility being reduced in 2007 we knew

that families earning over \$40,000.00 still needed the care and were receiving the care from the State because we had eligibility up to 225% of poverty. Now families are falling short each month. The study really shows when you reduce edibility those families now see a gap between earnings and expenses. Decision then are made by parents, do we keep our kids in care, find someone else who's not licensed. Child care helps parents be productive on the job, investment in people working in our economy. Families sometimes can't afford average/basic child care without help from the government. A study was done by Bryant University in 2002 that every \$1.00 that's invested in child care we get \$1.75 in economic activity. There are other studies that say the economic activity is even greater than the \$1.75. We know that child care not only provides child care for working families, but it also has created a huge industry. In March of 2009 there were 863 certified family home providers and 380 licensed child care centers in the state, which employed over 12,000 people.

Representative Diaz said that the state is facing difficult economic times. We can't forget about child care.

Gabriella Barros spoke about funding. Funds are need funding child care. Curriculum and professional development is important. Programs that enhance quality. An investment in child care is one of those investments that you sometimes can measure in some ways but probably can't measure in other ways. DCYF is responsible for certifying homes. Department of Health and Department of Education work closely on curriculum and professional development. We need the community, we need government, but we need the legislator to see child care as an important piece of the economy and an important piece of the work force. This is a forum to come together on these issues.

Representative Savage said that this exposes people to the "breath and depth of this commission". Greater weight, when people understand child care. The focus is on child care so there is a concencis emerges.

Representative Diaz spoke of all the state agencies involved in the commission. She asked that the membership identify themselves so that the Representatives could see who attends the meetings. All attendees identified themselves.

Representative Mattiello thanked the commission for the invitation. He said it was helpful to be there. He said he know the commission does good work, helps parents, kids-----good comes from commission. He suggested that the commission continue to invite as many Representatives and Senators so that “people can get a nuts and bolts view point of the issues.”

Senator Crowley spoke about good child care. She told the commission that all they see are numbers and facts. To see the people and how they represent our children, in the long run we will save on education dollars in the future. She encouraged getting more Senators involved. Finance, education and health committees would also be helpful to invite.

Ess spoke about economic development. Recommended that the Finance Committee consider developing plans that include some kind of child care incentive.

Mission of commission is child care issues. Legislation that impacts child care. We need to remember that each agency has a view. Future information is important.

Charlotte spoke about having on line courses very soon for providers.

Long awaited first meeting of DHS child care advisory committee is being reestablished-----December 2, 2009 at the United Way building. Everyone is welcome to attend.

RIASPA had two updates on October 23, 2009 they hosted a breakfast--- Lights on After School about the importance of after school programs. Panel *was lead by* Commissioner Gist. Bringing about the awareness of the quality and importance of after school programming in our State. Joseph Morra also wanted to thank the Legislator’s for passing H5967 on October 30, 2009 that sets up a Task Force on Summer Learning Programs.

Leanne Barrett spoke about December 9, 2009 is Bright Stars forum, Starry Starry Night. At the Marriot, everyone is invited. Starry Starry night is the quality rating system. In 2006 or 2007 there was a bill for voluntary quality rating system for quality child care providers. Eighteen states have them, emerging strategies to help parents find out about more helpful information about quality programs. It also helps policy makers find where the gaps are

in programs. Kids Count helped with the design. Quality rate is important, to move up and maintain.

Leanne spoke about Urban Education Task force. Governors Urban Education Task Force, two of the strategies for improving education in urban areas are; early childhood education and expanding Pre-K pilot and sustaining it and the other is expanded learning. Early literacy.

Laura Mason Zeisler spoke about building inspections issues. Providers need the information; it is in English and Spanish. Misinformation is a concern. Information attached to minutes.

DCYF and The City of Providence are meeting with child care providers that have basement businesses at 6:00 p.m. tonight to address concerns that have been in the media lately at Ready to Learn.

Membership has been an issue. Membership has been addressed. A meeting took place at the State House with Representative Diaz, Sharon, Laura, Leanne, and Karen to work on membership. Each member was given the report, which is attached to these minutes. We need a Republican Senator on the commission. Changes were made to attached membership report, see attached. Commission went over the membership list, voted and approved the membership. Twelve will be a quorum. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned.

