



## April 2023 Council Meeting

**Date/Time:** April 19, 2023 1:00-3:00pm

**Location:** NH Employment Security, 45 South Fruit Street, Concord

### Participants (18):

- Deputy Commissioner Christine Brennan
- Christina Lachance
- Deputy Commissioner Rich Lavers
- Karen Hebert (for Deb Nelson)
- Jeanne Agri
- Vicki Blanchard
- Kimberly Nesbitt
- Christina D'Allesandro
- Commissioner Shawn Jasper
- Patricia Tilley
- Representative DeSimone
- Michelle Lewis
- Chris Santaniello
- Dee Pouliot
- Rebecca Fredette
- Jane Bard
- Kate Baker
- Senator Whitley

### Guests:

- Krisha Dubreuil (NHED)
- Kate McCaffrey (NHED)
- Dr. Jessica Carson (UNH Carsey School of Public Policy/PDG Needs Assessment)

### Council Business (Christina Lachance)

- Erin Pettengill will be joining the Council; she fills the vacancy for: a representative of local providers of early childhood education and developmental services
- Vote to approve meeting minutes
  - *Motion to approve (Jeanne Agri)*
  - *Seconded (Rep. DeSimone)*
  - *All in favor, approved unanimously*
- This meeting is being recording to post to the Council website to provide an opportunity for parents, at the request of the B-8 Community and Parent Advisors, and other early childhood stakeholders to view the meeting after typical business hours.
- The June meeting needs to be rescheduled
  - Proposed June 2, 9-10:30am (same place)
  - 2 members comment they are unable to attend on June 2
  - Leadership will try to find another time

### Legislative Updates (Rep. DeSimone)

- Sununu Youth Development Center replacement project
  - Getting close to site selection
  - Priority is to make this a comfortable, home-like, rehabilitative environment with outdoor spaces

- Therapeutic rather than punitive approach
- Will have 12 beds with room to expand to 18

### **(Senator Whitley)**

- SB 237 (comprehensive child care supports) had traction in the Senate; currently being tabled/held by the Senate so it can be added to the final version of the budget
  - Don't have a number for child care workforce fund yet – need to get a clear sense of the needs for this fund
- Omnibus Bill (maternal health: \$2 million for doula, postpartum coverage extended, lactation support, coverage of donor milk, state funding for Family Resource Centers); being held so it can be added to the budget
- Less successful initiatives:
  - NH Ed.'s multi-tiered systems of support – died
  - Pre-k pilot program (consistent with PDG work) – not dead yet, but needs revision

### **NH Department of Education Updates (Christine Brennan, Kate McCaffery)**

- NH Loves Reading (<https://nhlovesreading.org/>)
  - A website with tips, strategies, and resources to help caregivers encourage a love of reading
  - This campaign will also include billboards and social media advertising
  - Campaign data:
    - Landing Page Traffic: 20,237
    - Facebook/Instagram: Completed
    - video views: 166K
    - Overall, the click-through rate is ~49% higher than the industry average
- LETRS
  - Update: Early Childhood Educators will receive a \$500 stipend for completion of LETRS course.
    - LETRS® ECE mastery level score of 80% on Posttests
    - Complete online and offline coursework,
    - Attend live-virtual trainings
  - 6 college credits are available through the American College of Education
  - LETRS is open to any teacher employed by a youth-serving organization/business, including child care, Head Start, home school
- Leaning into Literacy Grant
  - Competitive grant available to schools/teachers for purchasing materials to help with literacy activities
- 603 Bright Futures Survey
  - Over 8,000 respondents as of the meeting time
  - Continuing to spread the word
  - Past results (as well as this year's) are analyzed by Panorama and viewable through an interactive tool on NHED's website

### **Pre-K Mixed Delivery Task Force Update (Christine Brennan)**

- The task force has compiled information about their vision, but the finer details still need to be worked out. That said, DHHS released an RFP to create a pre-k pilot. The expectation is that experience and data from the pilot can inform a future voluntary pre-k mixed delivery system.

## **NH Department of Health and Human Services Updates (Karen Hebert, filling in for Debra Nelson)**

- ARPA Discretionary Plan (\$29 million)
  - A tremendous amount of work; careful attention is being given to best strategies for strengthening the child care system. NH's Child Care Strengthening Plan can be found [here.](#))
  - 4 focus areas:
    - Quality
    - Access
    - Workforce
    - Overall system infrastructure
  - Several procurements in progress [and are located on DHHS's procurement page.](#)
    - Granite Steps for Quality capacity-building project
    - Mixed-delivery pre-k program
    - Tuition assistance program for EC educators
    - Child care workforce recruitment and retention
  - Upcoming RFPs:
    - Child care business improvement project (for child care professionals to participate in a business health assessment)
    - Business and child care partnership program (meant to assess needs of employers and employees in the business community and to engage child care providers)
    - Marketing and outreach projects (intended to promote child care and to draw new providers to the workforce)
    - Early Childhood Regional Leads grant program
    - Improvements to NH Connections information system
    - Support for Out of School Time providers (assistance applying to Granite Steps for Quality)
    - Facility improvement grants for providers (available once business health assessments are complete)
  - Quarterly status reports will be posted to the DHHS website under "Other Reports and Presentations": <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/about-dhhs#reports>
  - March's Report: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt476/files/documents2/child-care-arpa-plan-status-report-032023.pdf>
- Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) awarded funds related to the NH's Childcare Strengthening Plan
  - \$3.6 million to be dispersed as one-time grants to child care providers to reduce the costs of their operating expenses; providers then pass savings on to their employees
  - Intent is ultimately to support the workforce
  - Will be an application grant; details are still being considered
  - Providers will have to report on the benefits they pass onto their employees
- Comment from Kim Nesbitt: reminder that all full-time EC employees are now eligible for 100% tuition coverage for EC courses at Granite State College and in the community college system. In part, from NH's Preschool Development Grant.
- Question regarding President Biden's "Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers" (4/18/23)
  - Response from Christina Lachance:
    - President Biden asked his cabinet members to keep ECCE and other forms of care in mind, but there is no funding associated with this order

- Certain federal contracts will be required to include child care funding, but it will be targeted, not systemic
- Ultimately, not a significant win for EC stakeholders

### **PDG Family Needs Assessment (Dr. Jessica Carson, UNH Carsey School of Public Policy)**

- [View the recording](#) from Dr. Jessica Carson's Coffee and Conversation presentation of these findings (a program of the UNH Carsey School of Public Policy)
- Summary infographics as well as reports were created and can be found [here](#)
- Awareness about family and child-serving programs varies across program type and family stage; word of mouth is the most common way families find out about services
- Child care need vs. availability
  - Note: due to workforce shortages, the state's licensed capacity does not equate to the number of open slots; estimates are that 20% of slots are unavailable due to closed classrooms
- Family Child Care (FCC) provider capacity is down 22.1% (according to Child Care Licensing Unit data), so child care options are concentrated in fewer large centers – this impacts rural families in particular
- Families using child care are typically not satisfied with their arrangement (only 20% say their arrangement is ideal).
  - Families are dissatisfied with many aspects of their child care including: location, costs, teacher quality.
  - Most common issue with child care is that the schedule does not match the family's needs.
- Families had mixed engagement with family supports (Home Visiting, Child care scholarships, WIC, SNAP, Early Intervention, reduced school lunches)
  - Lower-income families and families with older children were more familiar with family supports
- Unmet needs, areas for improvement:
  - Mental health supports and services are insufficient
- Policy recommendations:
  - Increase EC educator wages to match public school teachers
  - Kentucky is an excellent example of categorical eligibility for child care professionals: employees in child care are automatically eligible for (CCDF) child care scholarships
    - This should have positive impacts on recruitment and retention, we'll be looking to KY for data over the coming years.
  - Expand child care scholarship eligibility to more families
  - Support a robust mix of early learning providers through inclusionary state policy (e.g., licensing tech assistance) and local investment (e.g., tax breaks, in-kind contributions)
- Comment from Rich Lavers: NH has the second-highest percentage of workers with full- or part-time remote work opportunities. How might this impact child care needs
  - Response: This may be associated with the significant level of migration into NH during the pandemic – this would be a valuable question to research further
- Comment from Kim Nesbitt: under the 2023 PDG, there will be another needs assessment. Please send any specific questions, like Rich's, to Kim Nesbitt.

## **Public Comments:**

- Katie Brissette (Early Learning NH)
  - Asked NH ED: how LETRS program would be shared with child care professionals. Would like outreach materials for LETRS program so she can share the flyer with her network.
    - Website has been built, press release, direct communication, and through early childhood and school stakeholder groups
  - To Karen Hebert: will all \$29 million of ARPA D funding be used in the programs described?
    - Yes – it will be used in the programs already posted as RFPs and the ones being scheduled
- Leslie Ela (parent with B-8 Advisory Team)
  - Serves as a care coordinator for military family needs
- Sarah Fox (NH Alliance of Early Childhood Coalitions)
  - The NH Alliance of EC Coalitions has a new website
- Liz Scruton (NH Children’s Trust)
  - Working with Parent Information Center of NH to organize focus groups about child care scholarships
    - Asking about child care in general, scholarships, and the term “quality”
    - Will be recruiting for focus groups soon
    - Request: can FRCs be included in the next needs assessment?
      - Some FRC data was collected in past needs assessments – info will be shared
- Expanding Home Visiting (speaker unknown)
  - Hoping to push for this in the next few years
  - Wellness and Primary Prevention Council will be heading this up
- Erin Pettengill (FRC at Lakes Region Community Center) – serves on the Wellness and Primary Prevention Council; will be the newest member of the Council for Thriving Children

*Motion to adjourn (Rep. DeSimone)*

*Seconded (Jeanne Agri)*

*Motion approved.*