

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2022 Interim

November 3, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 6th meeting of the Early Childhood Education Task Force was held on Thursday, November 3, 2022, at 3:00 p.m., in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Samara Heavrin, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Danny Carroll, Co-Chair; Representative Samara Heavrin, Co-Chair; Senators Wil Schroder, Reginald Thomas, and Mike Wilson; Representative Josie Raymond.

Guests: John Montjoy, Kentucky Head Start.

LRC Staff: Ben Payne, Logan Bush, and Becky Lancaster.

Approval of Minutes – October 20, 2022

Senator Carroll made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2022, meeting, seconded by Senator Wilson. The motion passed by voice vote.

Child Care Provider Business Coaching

Jessica Cain, Program Manager for ARPA Funding, Division of Child Care, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Cathi Arwood, Manager, Child Care Program Policy, Texas Workforce Commission; and Chelsea Reddic, Policy Analyst, Child Care Program Policy, Texas Workforce Commission, spoke to the innovative approaches being taken to assist child care providers in establishing successful businesses.

Ms. Cain said that while many child care providers have a passion for caring for children, many do not have the business acumen necessary to run a successful child care business. Over the last ten years, child care providers have been in decline, largely due to the lack of business skills. Sustainability is a key requirement to making the industry viable when ARPA funding is exhausted.

Through the Kellogg grant, Kentucky was the first state to be trained on the Strengthening Business Practices series. Year-long Strengthening Business Practice academies are held for credentialed trainers across the state, and participation is a

requirement to qualify for start-up grants or the infant/toddler contracted slots pilot project. Facilitated by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and funded with \$2 million of ARPA dollars, the Administrator Director Apprenticeship program incorporates the Strengthening Business Practices program, as well as specific training on payroll, reporting, records keeping, hiring practices, early childhood programming ethics, and career readiness trainings.

In response to a question from Co-chair Heavrin, Ms. Cain said the Kellogg grant was received by the Prichard Committee to address family childcare services. Most of the work funded by the grant has been researching the field of family child care in Kentucky and providing special supports to family child care providers.

Ms. Arwood spoke to the statewide childcare coaching program being implemented in Texas. Texas is one of a small number of states that has its child care division within their workforce commission, which has been beneficial in terms of supporting child care providers as businesses. In addition to the child care relief funding, awarded directly to providers, the state saw the need to provide coaching to ensure the funds were spent wisely and created sustainable businesses. The coaching is a combination of three parts; a center-based or home-based program, a one-on-one specialized program, and a video series. The focus is to meet providers where they are and design a customized approach based on existing strengths.

Ms. Reddic explained the six core modules that define the coaching pathway, and providers can start at any point along the pathway. Coaches assist providers in each area and provide in-depth resources in each module. The goal is to provide a strong foundation to providers and at any time during the pathway, providers can be referred to specialists. Ms. Arwood shared demographic data regarding the participation rates among providers and showed that providers who received coaching were highly satisfied. Participation in the program dramatically improved the number of home-based providers who viewed themselves as business owners.

Responding to a question from Representative Raymond, Ms. Arwood said there have been many instances where the providers had not raised their rates in many years. But the coaches assisted in performing market research and how to initiate conversations among families regarding rate raises. It has also been beneficial for providers to have discussions about rate reimbursements available from the state.

Responding to a question from Senator Carroll, Ms. Arwood said the program is currently funded entirely with ARPA funds and it is not anticipated that the one-on-one business coaching will continue when those funds are depleted. The commission's focus will be on the business training program which is funded separately. Additionally, there are specific training modules, developed in conjunction with Texas A&M University.

In response to further questions from Senator Carroll, Dr. Sarah Vanover, Policy and Research Director, Kentucky Youth Advocates, said Child Care Aware does provide a training for anyone who applies for a license or certification to provide child care. Prior to the pandemic, the Child Care Aware program was used to direct individuals to the Strengthening Business Practices program. Kentucky has since established a permanent Family Child Care Network, which took on the task of training and provides the modules to providers. Ms. Cain said the Strengthening Business Practices series is free for coaches, but those coaches may charge a minimal fee to child care providers. The Family Child Care Network also is specifically tasked to assist providers with expert assistance in things such as tax filing and other business needs. Additional funding support will be needed to continue these programs when ARPA funds expire.

Responding to additional questions from Senator Carroll, Ms. Arwood said common struggles for centers and home-based providers revolve around budgets and knowing what their expenses are.

Child Care Educator Shortage Solutions

Stephanie Akers, Director, Educational Unit for Child Care Services, Morehead State University; Dr. Bridget Murray, Professor/IECE Program Coordinator, Henderson Community College; Ariel Ford, Director, Division of Child Development & Early Education, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; and Gwen Laaser, Director of Child Care Services, Division of Child Care and Community Services, Tennessee Department of Human Services were present to discuss various methods of addressing child care educator shortages.

Ms. Ford explained that the North Carolina Early Care and Learning Network has a mission to support the healthy development of children. Many child care providers and teachers want to stay in the profession, but their salaries and benefits force them to look elsewhere. One-third of these providers and teachers work full time, but their wages are so low, they have relied on public assistance in the last three years. Emergency funding from the federal government in response to COVID-19 closures has helped struggling teachers, but without increased, sustained, long-term investment, many fear the end of the federal funding will also mean the end of their early education programs.

The Child Care WAGE\$ program provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors, and family child care providers that work with children birth to age five. Participants must work at least six months in the same child care program to be eligible and the average supplement increases the typical hourly rate by \$1.16. A participant study found that WAGE\$ supplements help ease financial stress for 98 percent of respondents and 96 percent said it increased their job satisfaction. North Carolina also has a similar program specifically for infant-toddler educators, called the AWARD\$ program, which increases education, retention, and compensation of teachers and family child care educators working with the youngest group of children. The average supplement

in the AWARD\$ program increased the typical hourly rate by \$1.24 and has had similar positive feedback from participants in the program.

Ms. Laaser gave a brief overview of the structure of the Tennessee Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Community Services. The department has been focusing on transforming the industry from babysitters to professionals and improving the quality of child care and access throughout the state. They provide many supports to teachers and administrators including the WAGE\$ program, certifications, business academies, and many other resources. Educators apply directly for the WAGE\$ program. In order to be eligible, they must work in a licensed child care program, earn less than \$20 an hour, meet an education level, and work at least six months in the same child care program with children birth to age five for at least 10 hours per week.

In response to questions from Senator Carroll, Ms. Laaser said participants in the WAGE\$ program have a turnover rate less than 1.4 percent. Ms. Ford said their program has been in effect for a longer period, but it has also had a significant impact on reducing turnover. Ms. Laaser said the funding was provided through Child Care Development Fund monies from the department, and Ms. Ford said North Carolina uses a blended funding model with the state covering administrative costs and local non-profit organizations providing funding for local recipients. This allows all money raised in communities to go back into those same communities.

Dr. Murray gave a brief overview of Kentucky's Early Childhood Initiative which funded the original Kids Now scholarship program. It was an innovative approach to early childhood education. In 2002, the scholarship amount was \$1,500 and could cover tuition for eight classes per year at a community college. Scholars were limited to nine credit hours per term and students could earn an associate's degree in three years. An additional non-college scholarship was available from the Child Development Associate's (CDA) National Credentialing Program. This credential represents approximately three college classes and meets 50 percent of the requirements for the Kentucky Directors Credential.

Over time, participation in the scholarship has decreased, largely due to the lack of funds and students needing to submit the FAFSA. By filing the FAFSA some students were eligible for Pell Grants and those could not be combined with the scholarship. The scholarship has not increased to keep pace with the cost of college education, and does not fund as many courses as it previously did. Tobacco settlement dollars are no longer being allocated to the Kids Now Initiative and the Division of Child Care has had to find alternative funding for the program. Dr. Murray provided a comparison of the original scholarship with the current ARPA funded college scholarship.

Ms. Akers discussed the Kentucky Early Childhood Development Scholarship with the task force. Recipients of the scholarship either complete two courses and an independent study component to meet the training requirements of the CDA credential

process or complete four courses to meet the educational requirements to earn their Kentucky Directors credential. Prior to the ARPA fund increase, Morehead State University had some limited funds to cover additional tuition costs for scholars. Morehead State University offers a bachelors in child development, which does not include necessary education to receive a teaching certificate, as well as bachelors and master's degree programs for interdisciplinary early childhood education.

In response to questions from Senator Carroll, Ms. Akers said there are required courses for early child care at Morehead State University, but Dr. Murray said there are not required courses at Henderson Community College, except for those leading to the director's credential. Dr. Murray said there is a path for an associate's degree with some business coursework incorporated, and Ms. Akers said Morehead State offers an associate's degree but no business classes are specifically required before the master's level.

With no further business to come before the task force, the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m. The final meeting of the task force will be Monday, November 21, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.