

Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
Open Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 27, 2023, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Present: Emilie Amundson, Barbara Bales (designee), Priya Bhatia, Jillian Clemens, Morna Foy, Eric Fulcomer, Bianca Hill, Jose Martinez (designee), Kelly Matthews, Jennie Mauer, Suzette Mayotte, Kathy Mullally, Lana Nenide, Duy Nguyen, Stephany Pruitt, Deborah Rathermel, Katie Roberts (designee), Ruth Schmidt, Dr. Jill Underly, Dea Wright

Excused: John Ashley, Kia Kjensrud, Salvador Carranza, Peng Her, Lupe Martinez, Charlene Mouille, Cailin O'Connor, Mark Tyler

Call to Order, Agenda Review, and Approval of Minutes

- The meeting was called to order at 9:02 am by Duy Nguyen, Assistant State Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The agenda for the day's meeting was reviewed. Attendees were reminded that the public comment section of the meeting would occur at the end.
- Duy asked for a motion to approve the June 7, 2023, council meeting minutes. Jose Martinez made the motion to approve, and Kathy Mullally seconded the motion. The council voted to approve the minutes.

Co-Chair Welcome and Updates

- DPI State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly welcomed and introduced new council members Dr. Eric Fulcomer, President/CEO of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU), and Bianca Hill, newly elected Board President of the Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association (WCCAA). Both members provided a brief statement.
- Dr. Underly delivered the State of Education Address on Thursday, September 21, at the Capitol in Madison. The speech focused on change, especially when things become messy, and the improvements that develop because of it.
- Dr. Underly reminded listeners to be conscious of the stress they carry and to protect children from adult concerns. In addition, Dr. Underly foreshadowed the release of a new DPI reading-based program. She also announced the resignation of Duy Nguyen.
- Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson discussed the Governor's Executive Order #208, which called for a Special Session of the Legislature to address Wisconsin's workforce challenges and, in part, to stabilize the state's child care industry. The Governor and the DCF Secretary have taken time to visit various early learning programs in communities throughout the state. Emilie indicated that there is an open session and looked to the council for their thoughts

on how to continue the conversation and education pertaining to the child care crisis. The Governor's workforce bill has been assigned to a committee.

Budget Updates, Recent Legislative Action, and Member Discussion

- DCF's Division of Early Care and Education's Administrator, Priya Bhatia, provided a budget timeline and recap of recent events. As of the last ECAC Full Council meeting in June, the 2023-2025 Biennial Budget had not been finalized. The Joint Committee on Finance passed their motion in June. It did not include funding for Child Care Counts or Partner Up! programs. Priya outlined the Governor's requests for the Special Session (released in August); she reviewed the child care-related bills proposed by legislators in response to the Special Session; and she explained DCF's viewpoint regarding the bills. Priya also shared the work that is being done by the department to gather and generate useful information regarding the impact of Child Care Counts and its potential reduction or conclusion of funds. (See corresponding PowerPoint slides.)
- Member Discussion. Mindful questions were presented to the council members for their thoughts and ideas.
 - There was a concern that employers and workforce demands were missing at the advocacy table.
 - Members spoke of child care staff shortages and the need to address compensation/living wages, staff burn out, an increase in social/emotional challenges, and difficult work environments to promote long-standing, sustainable employees.
 - Data needs were discussed. Some wondered whether or not there is a waitlist of children going unserved and if there was information to support or refute this idea.
 - Disapproval was voiced regarding the proposed child care bill lowering the minimum age for assistant child care teachers to 16 years and for those teachers to work without supervision. However, youth are used extensively in child care settings in the northern part of the state. That area is also interested in increasing the capacity of family child care centers, as they are unable to support group child care centers.
 - Secretary Amundson indicated that regulatory reforms need to be thoughtful and intentional. The proposed bills were said to have been issued quickly and did not allow for reasonable review and/or collaboration. Some of the proposed child care bills are non-compliant with building codes and other local level requirements. Some thought impact statements for the bills and the alternatives would be helpful in decision making and in preventing the topic from being caught up in politics.
 - DCF staff and ECAC members were thanked for providing testimony at the legislative hearings and their advocacy efforts across the state to ensure the health and safety of Wisconsin's children.
 - It was agreed that there is currently no shortage of child care conversations,

questions, and advocacy, with discussions occurring at all levels, but the need for a common message for legislators was emphasized. Some believed an individual or group of individuals should represent the child care voice, e.g., the Ad Council.

- Grandparents who provide child care for their grandchildren were said to be an untapped audience/resource.
- It was noted that very few employers maintain child care provisions in their benefit packages. DCF provides a business-child care partnership tool kit on their website for communities interested in expanding child care and creating a strong, local workforce. Business Child Care Advocates, offered through Child Care Resource & Referral agencies, are said to offer more individual, personal assistance.

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 6, 9 am until noon. At that time, the council will continue work on advocacy efforts for quality and affordable early care and education. They will also address the alignment of policies and programs with the functions and activities outlined in the ECAC Executive Order.
- A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Katie Roberts; Jillian Clemens seconded the motion. The council voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:19 am.