

**NH Council for Thriving Children Quarterly Meeting
Public Comments/Questions: June 8, 2021**

Via Email:

The Governor mentioned the importance of coordination (right hand left hand) especially in light of all of the federal opportunities. How is coordination occurring at the highest level to take advantage of the ARP to address big gaps for children and families?

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I wanted to know if the Governor was aware of the massive child care staffing shortage and is he aware that this is the "workforce behind the workforce"? Has he been made aware of a recent letter requesting 4 immediate actions?

Amy Brooks
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Via Meeting Chat:

My name is Cellissa Hoyt, I work for Early Learning NH, as the Director of the State Early Learning Alliance (SELA). Programs are incredibly grateful for all the state and federal support to help keep childcare programs it has received to remain in business. I work closely with childcare programs throughout the state, many of them signed on quickly to the May 21 letter asking for immediate action.

Programs I speak to weekly share their most profound challenge which is the staffing shortage. Programs have lengthy waitlists, they have more families calling every day, and they have to turn families away even though they have space in their building. Classrooms sit empty or under enrolled because of the unprecedented workforce shortage.

Without action, childcare jobs will remain unfilled, and classrooms will be empty, and families will struggle to find care. I urge leaders to take immediate action of the 4 items outlined in the May 21 letter as they are desperately needed.

Thanks so much!
Warmly, Cellissa

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&
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Katie Brissette, Early Learning NH: Since the Governor has to leave before the public comment period will you be sure the share with him all of the public comments?

This is Julie McConnell from the NH Community Loan Fund. I want to applaud the ability of all to pivot through the pandemic, with particular recognition for DHHS leadership and staff in being so dedicated and responsive to the needs of families and the childcare community through incredibly challenging circumstances. As we are coming out of the pandemic, we are hearing consistently from our borrowers and the provider community about the dire need for staff. I know you heard about that earlier and have the letter shared by Lara Quiroga. Please know that the letter and the message requesting immediate help came directly from the field, and simply demonstrates the need to continue to be responsive to immediate needs on the ground while also moving this important state-level planning and coordination forward.

Hello – I am Kimberly McKenney the Director a the Easter Seals NH Child Development & Family Resource Center in Manchester. Today, I represent the early learning community and am 1 of over 100 individuals who signed the May 21st letter addressed to Governor Sununu and the Commissioners of the DOE and DHHS asking for immediate action for the childcare community. We appreciate the state and federal help that has been received thus far during the pandemic. This funding plus our passion for children and families has helped our business doors stay open. Unfortunately, we are at a crossroads where this is no longer enough. A workforce shortage is causing empty classrooms, doors to close and waitlists for families that you are providing incentives to return to work. We cannot wait until September/October for the workforce to return – we need action today. If quality care and opportunities cannot be secured now, parents will be left with difficult decisions that could lead to further need for “eyes on kids,” food insecurities, safety concerns and further mental health needs for families. We are not asking to pick winners or losers, we are asking to choose community. Please I ask you to take action immediately. As many of my co-workers will be honored this evening for their work in

the field, I ask they are also given hope. Support turning closed dark classrooms into thriving, laughter filled environments that they were designed to be. Support children, families and tomorrows future.

Sarah Fox: Thank you! I have been asking on a pretty regular basis about how the DCYF Child-well being transformation effort is aligned with the EC System building. Appreciate you following up when time allows. nhalliancerecc@gmail.com

Msalo: Who is responsible for answering this letter? It has been 3 weeks without even recognition of receiving it.

Kitty Larochelle: I am the Director at The Growing Years in Manchester. We are grateful for the funding that we have been given. The funding has helped to cover some of the losses we incurred during the pandemic. We are reaching the limits of tuition covering our expenses at this point. We can never charge more than parents can afford, yet that is on the horizon...childcare needs immediate attention. Our staff needs to earn a living wage. We need to retain the staff we have.

Deb Hunter: I am discouraged...we have received funds, thankfully! I used the money to help parents so they didn't have to pay for all the days that had to keep their children home because of the exclusion criteria...but now I don't have staff as they are burned out...I couldn't afford to give them the bonus money...I shouldn't have to. There was soooo much money lost.

Mariana O'Connor: an ask that the council support the letter dated 5/21/2021, signed by 1000+ providers and advocates, urging immediate action to address the staffing crisis. The council is in a unique position to bring together various state agencies and experts that can work together to quickly implement full level scholarship eligibility for all staff working in child care, as well as a \$5/hr incentive for individuals currently working in licensed and licensed-exempt programs. While building the workforce is important as we move forward, it is critical that programs can provide incentives to retain current staff.

Please note: NH Council for Thriving Children experienced technical issues during the 6.8.21 meeting and inadvertently missed some public comments. If your comment does not appear above, please send it to amy.west@unh.edu, so the record can be updated.