

Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care
July 12, 2023 Panel Meeting Minutes

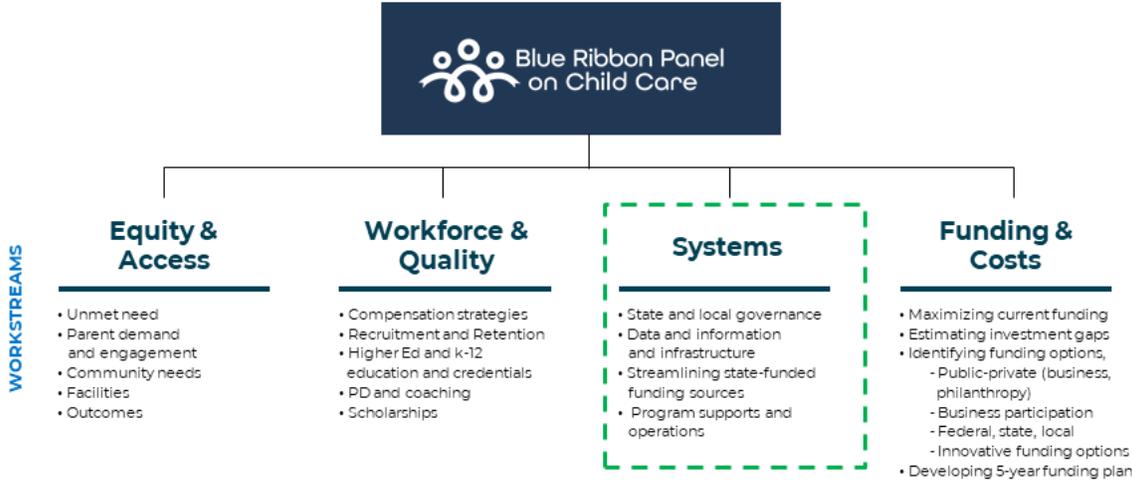
Welcome/Initial Remarks:

Eloisa Melendez called the meeting to order and shared the objective of the session: The OEC Systems workgroup to share initial recommendations, and elicit feedback and solutions from the Blue Ribbon Panel.

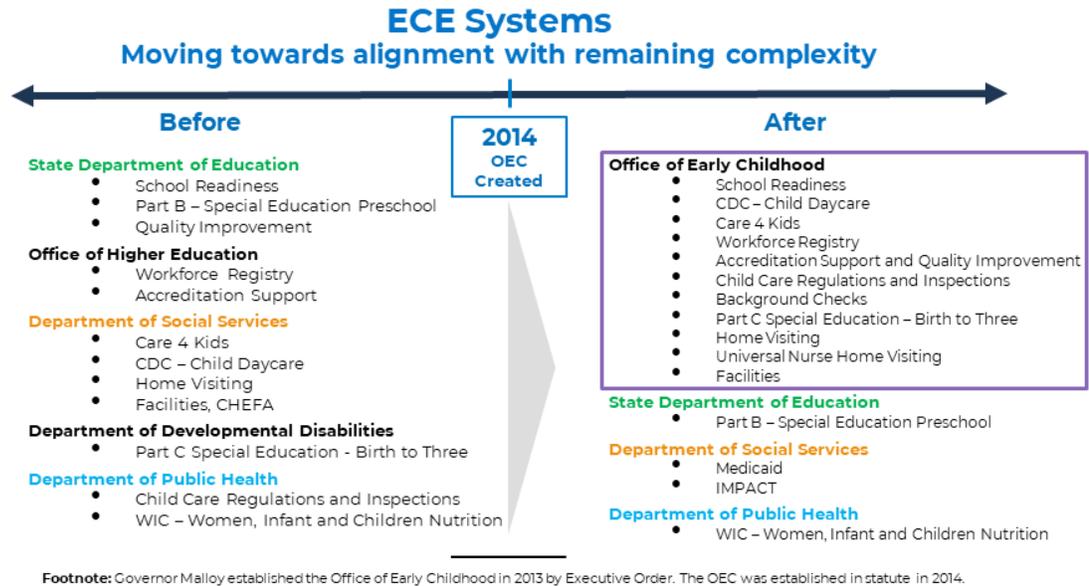
Workgroup Context:

- Commissioner Bye shared additional information about today’s session.
 - The Systems workgroup overlaps with the equity and access discussions the Panel has been having.
 - Trying to simplify and streamline the systems to make them work for families, programs, and communities to support the economy.
- Systems is the third of four interdependent work groups presented to the Blue Ribbon Panel.
 - These workgroups can be adjusted once final recommendations have been made by the Blue Ribbon Panel.
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Systems is the third of four interdependent workgroups presenting to the Blue Ribbon Panel



- Early Care and Education Systems are moving toward alignment with remaining complexity.



- Complexity of System from Three Perspectives

Complexity of System from Three Perspectives

Teacher	Director	Parent
<p>Licensing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head teacher requirements <p>Legal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background checks <p>Registry & Professional Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Education Access, Requirements in Development Opportunities in Registry, ECE, SR Councils, CAEYC, NAFCC <p>Standards and Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Learning Standards and Assessment in ECE <p>Birth to Three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If child needs supports 	<p>Licensing & Accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director requirements Regulations (E License) ECE & RESCs (support) <p>Legal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background checks (BCIS) <p>Registry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Staff <p>United Way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care 4 Kids <p>School Readiness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SR Councils for grants <p>CDC Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants and contracts <p>Head Start & Early Head Start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Education pre-school 	<p>United Way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care 4 Kids 211 to find care and check on licensing inspections <p>School Readiness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local SR Council process for enrollment in SR program <p>CDC Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment process; program recruitment <p>Head Start & Early Head Start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment <p>Public school pre-school</p> <p>Birth to Three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment, if needed

Draft Recommendations to the Blue Ribbon Panel: *presented by Jill Marini and Cathy Lenihan*

- Grounding the Panel in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory
 - Viewing child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment
 - Keeping the child in mind (what they need, where they live, their families, and communities)
- Systems goal: build an equitable, efficient ECE system that is informed by current data and that fosters the sustainable provision of high-quality programs and services for young children and their families in Connecticut
- The workgroup has drafted recommended strategies to the Blue Ribbon Panel according to three key categories:
 - Funding Systems
 - Governance
 - Program Enrollment & Operations and Data & Outcomes
- Funding Systems Recommendations:
 - Consolidate the number of state-funded ECE funding sources from five (School Readiness, Child Day Care, Smart Start & Smart Start for Recovery, State Head Start Supplement, Care4Kids) to one.
 - Fund programs by classroom, based on blocks of time (informed by local community needs).
 - Deploy unified state funding to programs through State of Connecticut Purchase of Service (POS) contracts, rather than the current mix of grants and POS contracts; distribute payments directly to programs, quarterly in advance of service provided, rather than through contractors/fiscal agents.
 - Appoint regional ECE governance bodies (aligned with intermediary regional governance structure in Governance recommendations) to assess unmet need for high-quality ECE by community every three years; and develop an annual plan for local disbursement of state funds allocated to communities in alignment with demonstrated needs and local assets.
 - Convert the funding structure to reflect the true cost of care rather than market rates.
- Governance Recommendations:
 - Create and fund a cohesive governance system that covers all towns and provides an opportunity for local partnership and collaboration to allocate state funding.
 - Design and fund an intermediary regional governance structure to support local bodies.

- Create support at the state level to bolster the capacity of local and regional governance bodies.
- Create a common needs assessment, with common data collection across local governance bodies.
- Program Enrollment and Operations Recommendations:
 - Create a unified navigation system that provides a central location for families and providers to access all necessary information for child care in the state of Connecticut.
 - Provide incentives to programs that utilize systems (i.e., navigation system, assessment system, business supports, and Care4Kids) to improve business practices.
 - Provide resources and supports for providers (informed by provider feedback loops) such as a shared services plan and onboarding supports for newly licensed programs.
- Data and Outcomes Recommendations:
 - Enhance and integrate existing data systems (i.e., Provider 360 Portal, Registry, etc.) to support the creation of a comprehensive data system for providers that unifies program data entry and invoicing processes for state-funded programs.
 - Streamline process for families to access child care information and availability.
 - Collect common needs assessment data from local and regional governance bodies, and provide data on OEC website.
 - Implement a statewide system to assess Connecticut children’s early learning and development from birth to age 5 that will be linked to the State Department of Education and local school kindergarten enrollment processes, by leveraging an existing platform.
 - Create a transparent statewide data dashboard to share aggregate operations data and outcome measures with the field.

Breakout sessions:

Room 1:

- Difference between true cost of care and market value
 - True cost of care is what it actually costs to run an early child care facility plus paying educators a livable wage
- Consolidation could provide a road for inclusion, but could also further exclude community-based providers that families rely on
- All of the current systems are daunting, need real structural change
- Discussion if these will be recommendations, mandates, or incentive-based
- The goal of these recommendations is not to be a burden to providers, but to streamline their business practices and ultimately make their businesses stronger
- Spell abbreviations out for those not entrenched in the field
- Pinpoint the negative feelings around the word “regionalization”

- How will these recommendations be cared for across differently funded and operated programs?
- Licensing is a good entry point for collecting information from all providers across all programs
- As Elevate is rolled out, it can be another entry point for collecting information from all providers across all programs
- Additional coaching needed for Family Child Care Centers to encourage licensing
- Emphasis on providing support to providers and Staffed Family Child Care Networks (SFCCN)
- Push for a marketing campaign that has a unified, cohesive, and coherent message in different languages
- Consider the lack of trust from providers in terms of sharing data; provider experience is critical in this area
- Deliverables requested:
 - Spell OEC abbreviations out for those not entrenched in the organization
 - Table that identifies the locus of authority over each recommendation (Federal, State, General Practice)
 - Examples from other states on presumptive eligibility for C4K programs to help fill classrooms faster

Room 2:

- Prioritizing governance structure, then data collection, then streamlining funding system
- Recurring issues for parents: unable to find what they need, not easy to understand funding
- Centralize and streamline
- Look at the variety of different supports needed and starting off on the right foot versus backfilling after a crisis
- Reduce the funding streams to have basic supports in place
- Importance of terms used across field (classroom is not used for family child care providers)
- Equity and access are vital components
- Importance of not creating a system that requires more work for parents and providers
- Statewide Parent Cabinet Advisory Body to learn how each level of the system thinks and how they are interconnected, and provide a voice of parents or caregivers
- In a 5-year timeframe, parental voice and engagement is high priority.
- Collect data to know what is working
- Stabilize funding so programs can be efficient
- Regional structure can help to gather more voices to the table and worth looking into, as long as all the bases and geographical areas are covered

Timeline & Wrap-up:

- Commissioner Bye expressed gratitude for feedback gathered from today's meeting, encouraged Panel to share their thoughts or send in their questions, and offered setting up time to discuss offline.

