SWFI Public Policy Action Group

Meeting Summary

October 8, 2018

The work group discussed proposals from the [Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission](https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/early-childhood-and-school-readiness-legislative-commission/2018-regular-session) and other ideas for expanding the number of and access to child care slots in the state. It also reviewed ideas for policy changes to expand access to child care.

1. Application of the International Fire Code that treats homes with five or more children as commercial residences requiring expensive sprinkler systems and changes to prevent fires.
	* The Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission met during the interim, reviewed this issue and proposed legislation to address it.
	* Stakeholders agreed to kill the bill in favor of taking an approach that encourages local governments to address the issue locally. They can adopt Appendix M to the International Fire Code that continues to treat child care homes as personal residences. While it requires the homes take necessary protections against fire and act to ensure the safety of children, it does not require expensive sprinkler systems.
	* It appears that many local governments are not aware of Appendix M and this approach to dealing with fire protection. The challenge is that each jurisdiction must act requiring an outreach and communications campaign to reach each local government.
	* Members of the action group and child care providers can help by contacting local officials and encouraging them to adopt Appendix M.
2. Early Childhood Educators’ Tax Credit
	* The Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission recommended the legislature adopt a tax credit for early childhood educators.
	* It is based on similar credits in Nebraska and Louisiana that would provide up to a $2,000 per year refundable tax credit if the educators obtain needed qualifications and advanced in their careers.
	* It is estimated to cost about $10 million and would provide a wage supplement to early childhood educators outside of the wages paid by the child care center and is based on research showing its effectiveness.
3. Working with schools to provide space for infant and toddler care.
	* Use space in elementary schools for infant and toddler care services which some providers in Denver are doing with DPS.
	* This is the subject of a Gary Community Investment Innovation grant and could be an approach to expand access to this care and make it more affordable.
	* There are issues related to design of the class rooms to ensure safety and licensing requirements that limit the number of children that can be served in each setting.
	* Adams County has an infant/toddler workgroup in which the children can move from infant care to toddler care with the same provider. It is possible to allow providers serve children of multiple ages in the same room but the licensing requirements are daunting.
4. There are several efforts that are applying national models to make it easier for home child care providers to gain economies of scale and set up child care businesses.
	* Diane Price is running Early Connections Learning Centers in Colorado Springs which is based on a national program from Chattanooga, Tennessee.
	* My Village is a start-up in Boulder that is a “business in a box” that helps people start child care centers. It provides back office support and works with providers to recruit additional service providers.
	* Wonder School from Oakland, California is an approach that knits together home child care providers, provides back office support and helps them run as sustainable businesses.
5. CCAMPIS Grants help colleges provide child care to students
	* The U.S. Department of Education is providing funding for colleges to set up child care centers on campus.
	* Four Colorado schools currently use funding to run child care centers and it could be expanded to other colleges.
6. Provide higher CCCAP reimbursement rates for centers located in child care deserts
	* Higher reimbursement rates could encourage more licensed providers to set up in these areas.
	* However, there are concerns that many families can not get access to CCCAP. It is taking six months in many communities.
	* CCCAP needs to make sure it addresses three policy levers to expand child care slots – (1) funds for capital; (2) consistent demand for students; (3) fair tuition rates.
	* Child care providers need funds for capital expansions such as bathrooms, classrooms and facilities in general.
	* Providers should receive payments for a set number of students in their centers whether the students attend on a particular day or not. The centers must gear-up to serve all the students and should be paid based on contracted slots as opposed to daily attendance.
	* CCCAP should reimburse child care centers based on the costs of providing education, particularly to infants and toddlers.
	* Child care centers rely on the funding for serving pre-school students to cover the costs of serving infants and toddlers. As the state and localities expand the number of pre-school slots they provide, we need to ensure that some of them go to community groups and centers, not just to public schools. It is one way to maintain our mixed delivery model.
	* Need data to show what it costs to serve infants and toddlers and where and how they are currently being served.
7. Allow non-licensed child care providers to participate in the food nutrition program
	* [Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program)) provides aid to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes for the provision of nutritious food.
	* A variety of public or private nonprofit child care centers, Head Start programs, outside-school-hours care centers, and other institutions which are licensed or approved to provide day care services participate in CACFP. For-profit centers that serve lower income children may also be eligible.
	* This is a federally funded program run through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The requirement that centers be licensed is based on federal law and regulations.
	* It might be possible to extend access to this program to child care providers that are not licensed but eligible for CCCAP. This will take more research to see if the program can be adjusted to serve these centers.