

Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report Presentation

Kristenza Nelson & Quentin Wathum-Ocama

Committee Background Information

Committee Membership

- Maggie Barnes, Licensed Family Child Care Provider
- Rachel Boettcher, Community Member
- Lynne Bolton, Saint Paul Federation of Educators
- Eric Haugee, Community Member
- Halla Henderson, Saint Paul School Board
- Mitra Jalali, City Council, Ward 4
- Megan Jekot, Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood
- Hwa Jeong Kim, Minnesota Voice
- LaVon Lee, American Indian Montessori
- Nicolee Mensing, Head Start
- Camila Mercado Michelli, CLUES
- Kristenza Nelson, Community Member
- Rebecca Noecker, City Council, Ward 2
- Khalid Omar, Kids Count on Us, ISIAAH
- Kera Peterson, Regional Labor Federation
- Tracy Roscoe, ISIAAH
- Clare Sanford, Minnesota Child Care Association
- Maria Scot, Community Member
- Sai Thao, Hmong Early Childhood Coalition
- Stephanie Thomas, Minnesota Child Care Association
- Brianna Trinidad Sprung, Saint Paul Public Library
- Leah VanDassor, Saint Paul Federation of Educators
- Zang Vang-Lee, Hmong Early Childhood Coalition
- Quentin Wathum-Ocama, Saint Paul Public Schools, Office of Early Learning
- Nelsie Yang, City Council, Ward 6
- Barbara Yates, Think Small

Our Charge

The Legislative Advisory Committee was charged with:

- Evaluating a locally governed program to ensure universal and equitable access to early care and education for all Saint Paul children (the “Program”); and
- Exploring public funding, and any other relevant funding options, for the Program.

The Committee was tasked with exploring early care and education accessibility for all Saint Paul families, making recommendations to the City Council on the potential design and implementation of the Program and, if appropriate, to propose legislation that would establish the Program.

The Committee was required to present its recommendations no later than March 26, 2023.

Early Care and Education

When we talk about **Early Care and Education**, we are talking about an extremely diverse and complicated landscape:



School-Based

Public
(PreK & ECSE)

Charter

Private



Head Start

Early Head Start
(Infants and Toddlers)

Head Start
(3- to 5-year olds)



Center

Range of Ages Served
Depending on the Provider
(Infants to to 5-year olds)



Home

Range of Ages Served
Depending on the Provider
(Infants to to 5-year olds)

Includes Licensed Home Childcare
& Non-Licensed Family, Friend and
Neighbor (FFN)

Frequency of Meetings

The Committee met 11 times from late October 2022 to mid-March 2023.

- 10/27/2022
- 11/10/2022
- 11/17/2022
- 12/1/2022
- 12/15/2022
- 1/5/2023
- 1/19/2023
- 2/2/2023
- 2/16/2023
- 3/2/2023
- 3/16/2023

Committee planning meetings occurred on a near weekly basis during this time.

Committee Process

Some of the topics discussed included:

- Governance.
- Funding.
- Eligibility.
- Professional Development.
- Workforce Support.
- Accountability.

Committee Process

Committee meetings were conducted utilizing a variety of facilitation methods to help committee members process, discuss, and ultimately make a decision. This included:

- Presentations on early learning program models & existing systems
- Large Group Discussion
- Facilitated Small Group
- Exit Tickets
- Online Surveys

Understanding the Need

The Case for Early Intervention

“Children’s brains develop rapidly in the first five years of their lives, acquiring language, motor skills, emotional capacities, problem-solving abilities, and pre-literacy skills. **Early intervention in these critical years has been proven to have significant impacts on children’s future success in school**, including reductions in special education placement and higher rates of high school graduation. When children lack access to quality early learning, they are more likely to struggle in school – and the outcomes for low-income children can be especially stark. **By the start of kindergarten, poor children perform significantly worse on tests of cognitive ability than children from higher-income families”**

- Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report (pg. 2-3)

The Case for Early Intervention

“Stable and dependable care is critical to our economy as a whole. **Nationally, the Council for a Strong America reported that the child care crisis has caused \$122 billion dollars in lowered earnings and productivity.** Because this study looked solely at parents of children 0 - 3, and did not include children ages 4 and 5 who are not yet in kindergarten, the economic impact is even greater than reported. **When families are unable to find or afford child care, employers experience huge disruptions in their labor force from issues such as employee absences and turnover.**”

- Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report (pg. 3)

Despite the clear benefits of early learning, many Saint Paul families are unable to access it.



0 to 4 Year Old Saint Paul Residents by Income Bracket

November 15th, 2022 v3

	< 1 year olds	1 year olds	2 year olds	3 year olds	4 year olds	Total	Cumulative Total	% of Total
0-185% poverty	2,274	1,986	1,994	2,308	1,987	10,549		
0-100% poverty	1,142	1,137	1,195	1,228	925	5,627	5,627	27.0%
101-200% poverty	1,132	908	907	1,279	1,099	5,325	10,952	52.5%
201-300% poverty	713	566	666	631	718	3,294	14,246	68.2%
301-400% poverty	249	454	616	198	382	1,899	16,145	77.3%
401-500% poverty	731	164	242	200	116	1,453	17,598	84.3%
Over 500% poverty	630	538	1,060	436	612	3,276	20,874	100.0%
Total	4,597	3,767	4,686	3,972	3,852	20,874		

Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey data (range of years or midpoint of 2018 can be used for reference), United States Census Bureau, via IPUMS. The data is derived a survey rather than a census, each datapoint above represents an estimate rather than an exact count. Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2021.


Note: Census data determines poverty status at a family scale, and the assigned to every member of the family by size of family.

Produced by the Research & Mapping Team, Saint Paul Department of Planning & Economic Development, November 15th, 2022.

The Need in Saint Paul

Finding child care is **difficult** and **expensive**.

Minnesota is the 4th most expensive state for child care, and Ramsey County is the 6th most expensive county in Minnesota.



The median
monthly cost for
Ramsey County is
\$1,085 or **\$13,021**
annually.

The Current Funding Landscape

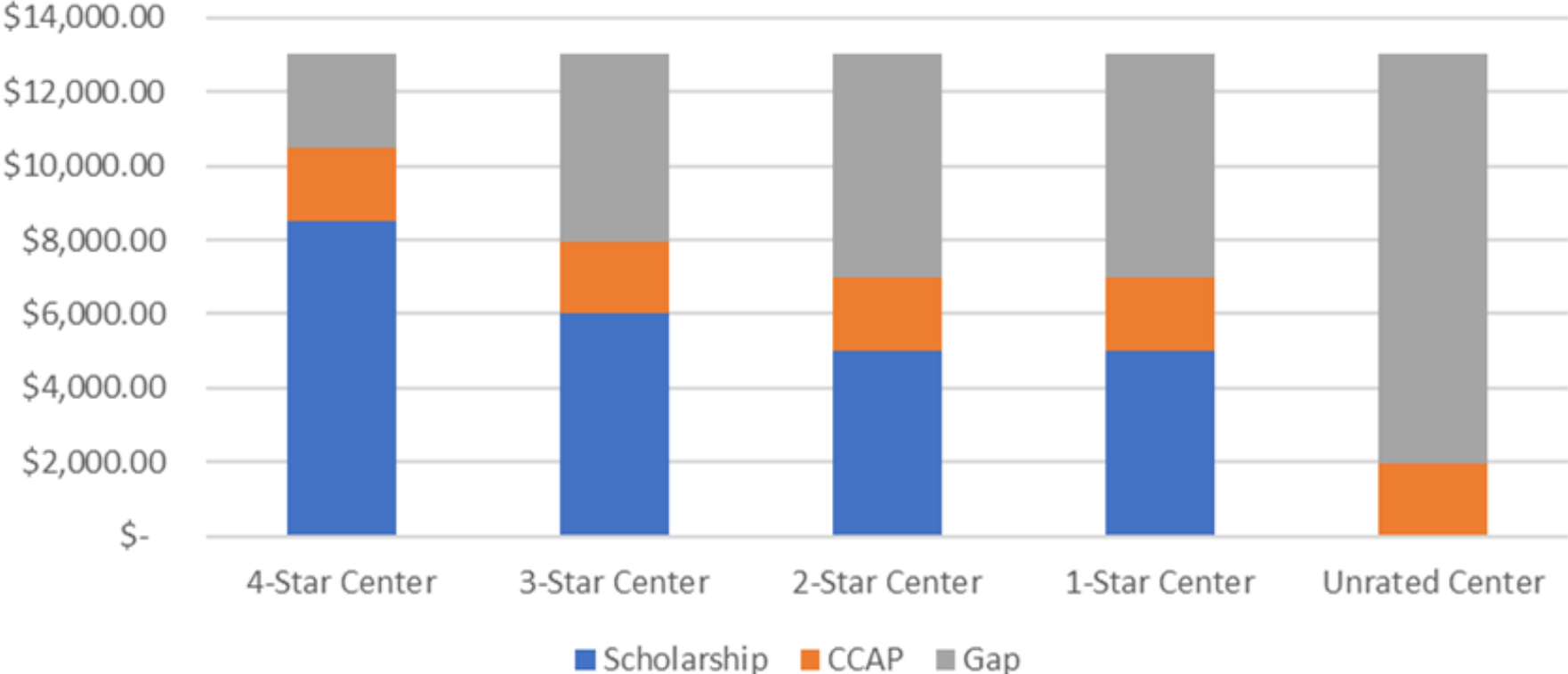
“Current investments at the federal and state level are not enough to support Saint Paul’s youngest children at this critical time in their development. While it isn’t possible to ascertain exactly how many families are unable to access care, the size of current wait lists suggest that there are many families, living at very low incomes, who are unable to access public funding to place their children in care”

Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report (pg. 7)

There are four early care and education programs that serve Saint Paul families. All are underfunded and all have families on waitlists.

	Income Eligibility for Family of 4		Waitlist
Head Start & Early Head Start	\$ 27,750	100% FPL	724
Saint Paul Public Schools	\$ 51,338	67% Area Median Income (eligibility for free and reduced price lunch)	817
CCAP	\$ 55,266	67% State Median Income	3,661
Early Learning Scholarships	\$ 51,338	185% of FPL	373

The Child Care Funding Gap



Quick Summary of Recommendations

Guiding Principles for Recommendations

“The Committee strived to provide recommendations that would be feasible and actionable by the City, supported by relevant community data and information, make use of all existing resources and fill the gap to implement a program that centers children and their working families, and not duplicate work that is already being done.”

- Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report (pg. 9)

What Qualifies as a Recommendation

The recommendations below were generated using a final exit survey. Eighteen of the 19 voting Committee members completed the survey. For organizations with multiple representatives, only one representative completed the exit survey on behalf of the organization. City Councilmembers did not complete the exit survey.

Questions that received an answer of “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” by at least 75% of respondents were considered recommendations.

Committee members were also asked “Do you think the City should have a local childcare and early learning program at all?” with 89% of Committee members strongly agreeing.

Recommendations

The City should have a locally-governed child care and early learning program.

The program should be primarily funded through a new, dedicated, public revenue source.

To be eligible for program funding, all families must be residents of the City of Saint Paul.

Families should be eligible to receive program funding without regard to immigration status.

Program funding can cover tuition or costs at the following settings: Saint Paul Public Schools, Head Start and Early Head Start, licensed family child care, and child care centers.

Recommendations

Saint Paul should continue to evaluate how best to support unpaid family, friend, and neighbor care.

Program funding should be available for any scheduling option that meets families' needs, from part-time up to and including year-round, full- and extended-day care.

Program funding should fully cover the cost of care for families at 185% federal poverty level and below. Families who earn more should be subsidized on a sliding scale.

When fully funded, the program should serve all Saint Paul children ages 0-5.

If program funding is not available for all children, the program should prioritize families with the most need. To determine need, the program would create a point system (to be developed later) that takes into account factors like income, homelessness, foster care, parents under 21, etc.

Recommendations

The program should be as easy as possible for providers and parents to access and should explore ideas like a single application, translation, navigators (both centrally located and community-based), etc.

The program should create an online tool (or link to a tool that already exists) and employ staff to help families find the right program and apply for aid.

If the revenue for the program is raised solely by Saint Paul taxpayers, program funding should only go to providers located in Saint Paul.

A process or waiver should be developed for granting program funding to a provider outside of Saint Paul in extenuating circumstances.

Recommendations

Providers receiving program funding must, at a minimum, be licensed or a legal non-licensed provider.

The program should develop ways to support providers in obtaining licensure and meeting program standards.

Program funding should follow the child or fund seats at providers for any child to use (similar to Pathway I and II Early Learning Scholarships). Both ways should be included.

The program should be operated by the City of Saint Paul, via a new or existing city office or department.

The program should be held accountable for fiscal and program performance according to clearly defined performance indicators and annual financial audits.

Recommendations

The program should include strong parent, provider and community voices in policy decision-making through appropriate structures like a governing board, advisory committee, or other structure.

Program revenue should supplement and not replace funding available from other sources, such as Early Learning Scholarships, CCAP, and any other state or federal funding.

The City should pursue a special levy approved by voters that increases property taxes over a period of time for a dedicated use.

The program should be designed to take advantage of future additional state or federal funding to ensure that local dollars can be directed to Saint Paul children's unmet needs.

Topics for Further Investigation

Topics for Further Investigation

These are a highlighted few topics for further Investigation for the City and Council:

- How can any program help ensure competitive pay and benefits on par and aligned with K-12 education for childcare workers in the program and as an employment?
- How can any programming be designed to fund seats and classrooms in order to expand capacity in the current childcare system?
- If programming includes any standards for participation, how is cultural competency being incorporated as a key cornerstone and who is making decision on developing the standards?

There may also be further opportunity for the city to investigate how it can best support Friend, Family, and Neighbor child care providers.

“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children”

- Tǎathánka Íyotake (Sitting Bull)

Questions?