

January 9, 2015

Mary Kate Mouser, Executive Director
Nemours Health and Prevention Services and
Chair, Delaware Early Childhood Council
Applied Bank Center, 8th Fl Rm 401
2200 Concord Pike
Wilmington DE

Dear Mary Kate,

The Sustainable System Improvement Committee met in late October. We heard a presentation from Secretary Ranji on the accomplishments and expenditures under the state's Early Learning Challenge grant, a presentation from RAND on its evaluation of the Delaware Stars Quality Rating and Improvement System, and we assessed our current status in quality early learning system development as well as what can be done to effectively advocate for sustainable system improvement in the coming year.

I wanted to inform you of the action items that will be undertaken by our committee following from our discussion during the meeting. They are:

- Carefully monitor grant budget v expenditures, focusing on the tiered reimbursement financial incentive and identify any need for additional funding in the coming year. Monthly financial reports will inform the committee's work;
- Identify actions to trim grant spending going forward and ensure availability of funds for essential initiatives;
- Ensure well-supported basis for any funding requests for the post-grant period
- Rank grant projects in priority order for sustainability;
- Develop tailored messaging to key stakeholders to help ensure consistency in messaging and effective advocacy for sustainability for optimal influence;
- Make training available to Council members and others on HOW to message for optimally effective advocacy;
- Develop and formalize an outreach plan for contacting legislators, taking into account the legislative budget time schedule; and
- Actively participate as committee members in any opportunities to support and advance advocacy for sustainability of system improvements and going quality improvement (e.g. the 2014 Early Learning Summit, upcoming spring 2015 statewide meeting series to garner stakeholder input on sustainability of key components of the Challenge grant to inform decision-making, specifically state budget development).

Our Sustainable System Improvement Committee respectfully suggests that the action steps below are opportunities that the Council and its members should undertake in support of effective advocacy and sustainable early learning system improvement in Delaware:

- Seek to confirm the state's commitment to continuation of its \$22M investment in quality early learning;
- Encourage investment in the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) that is essential for the development of data-driven decision making in early childhood system development, including identification of external financial resource;
- Ensure that early learning providers are aware that their concerns regarding sustainability of key supports, including tiered reimbursement, professional development and technical assistance are heard by the Council and will be communicated to State decision-makers;
- Encourage providers to participate in the spring, 2015 stakeholder meetings to provide input on sustainability;
- Support parental engagement in early learning;
- Continue to support development of effective marketing strategies to raise the profile of the Star rating system as a support for families, helping them find quality early learning programs for their young children; and
- All members participate actively in advocacy and sustainability input opportunities, leading the community effort to inform decision-making on sustainability. It is essential that the Council's membership be well represented at each and every opportunity, leading by example.

I look forward to working with you, the other committee chairs and our Council's members as we undertake the advocacy necessary to sustain early learning system improvements in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Freel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ed Freel, Chair

Cc: M Bayard, Council Co-Chair