

# CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

April 11, 2023

7:00 p.m.

## Fairfax County Government Center Conference Room 4/5

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	Wynne Busman, Valerie Inman, Monica Jackson, Gita D'Souza Kumar, Janet Reimer, Scott Stroh
<b>MEMBERS ABSENT</b>	Kerry O' Brien, Liz Cassidy, Mercedes Dash, Evelyn Evans (due to technical difficulties)
<b>STAFF PRESENT</b>	Keisha Dotson, Suzanne Ritchie

### **Call to Order**

Scott Stroh, Chair, called the April 11, 2023, Child Care Advisory Council meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Members and staff introduced themselves.

### **Review of Minutes**

The March 14, 2023, meeting minutes were reviewed, and approved. Motion to approve without any changes was made by Monica Jackson, seconded by Valerie Inman, and passed unanimously.

### **Discussion of Actionable Next Steps: Communal and Societal Needs**

Scott then introduced the last strategic planning topic in the Thematic Needs Assessment, which is Communal and Societal Needs. He summarized the challenges community members face regarding accessing child care. These include, but are not limited to access to affordable care, language and technology barriers, and the needs of infants and those with diverse needs. Monica reiterated that child care is relevant to the economy and that societal systems would not work without the support of child care providers. Valerie mentioned the point that investing in children is investing in the future and brings more positive qualities to society. Wynne added that child care also prevents children from falling into negative life patterns.

Valerie began a group discussion about the need to highlight the joy and positive impacts of Early Childhood Education as well as asking for necessary changes. The group agreed that there is a big need to explore the relationships and connections home child care providers have with the families they serve. Monica shared a story of how she recently traveled to Maryland to do a home visit with one of the families she serves. She thought about how many providers there were between where she is located and where the family lived and how they chose to drive to her day care every day. The family eventually moved so they could be closer to her, which highlights the strong connections she has to her community.

Janet suggested producing a PSA to highlight engagement and connection stories, and Valerie added that they could use Channel 16 and social media to spotlight providers. Janet added that they should also focus on the need to recruit more home child care providers. The group agreed on this point, and

Monica emphasized that the messaging should make becoming a provider more inviting and focus on training and supporting new providers.

The topic of funding for these new ventures was the next topic. Keisha asked the Council to give her formal word of what they would like to do because she can help facilitate resources and connections. There is the possibility of exploring in-kind donations of time and services in addition to securing monetary funding. Janet and Keisha both mentioned that George Mason University could be a great resource for filming and production of videos. Scott asked if there was a way for the Council to accept private funds or funding from the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. Keisha said she would need to check because receiving money from outside sources can sometimes be a problem. She will do research and come back with data for the next meeting.

Scott asked the group to look at other communal and societal needs, barriers, and actionable next steps. Wynne emphasized that access to quality affordable care is a real barrier and that middle-income families often do not qualify for affordable programs. She suggested that business and large employers (like Target, for example) could offer grants to their employees to help offset the cost of care. Janet asked if there were any providers left who could accept families on a sliding scale. The consensus from the group is that the number of providers offering subsidized care is dwindling, however the need for it is growing and dramatically increased during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Scott asked the group if they thought scholarships would be helpful to offset the cost of care. Janet disagreed strongly. There is potential for abuse of scholarships and managing them would be a full-time job for providers. She thinks that advocating for more subsidized programs is the road to pursue.

Scott said the group needs to identify the most important things they want people to know. Why do we have childcare? How to package this message and think about what the Council wants to tell people. Monica said it is vital to emphasize that children, families, and business all benefit from child care and it is vital to package the value of care for our community. There is a need to redefine when education starts (at birth, not just when a child enters kindergarten) and look at the bigger picture to really encapsulate the value of care.

Scott encouraged the group to do two actionable next steps:

1. Think about building a case for support. Need to articulate what to include in the message. Is this data, stories, testimonials? This is a larger undertaking, but it puts the Council in a better position to talk to potential partners.
2. Reach out to the fifteen regional Chambers of Commerce in Fairfax County. He encouraged everybody to meet with the executive boards of these groups and ask for advice first, and support later. Ask what would be helpful to share with the members of these groups.

Scott asked if there was anything else from the Council related to these steps. Monica mentioned that Sallyann Bergh held a summit with the Reston Chamber of Commerce years ago. The Council could check with her and potentially use that framework to make connections there. Scott said these were all good next steps. He asked the group if there were other barriers to discuss, no additional suggestions were mentioned. The council moved on to the topic of Old and New Business.

### **Old and New Business**

There was a brief review of the All-Virtual Public Meetings & Remote Participation policies. Keisha and staff will capture the needs of the group for virtual meetings and remote participation and produce a quick reference of the rules. The Council agreed they will decide in advance when they want to hold virtual meetings. Scott also mentioned that Council members who need to participate remotely must notify him in advance of the meeting.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm. The motion was made by Gita D'Souza Kumar and seconded by Wynne Busman.

### **Next Meeting**

May 9, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center

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