

October 7, 2022

Bold on Early Educator Compensation Learning Community
Session # 13: Build Political Power - working with legislators

Overview:

The group heard from two participants and state legislators: Representative Senn (WA) and Representative Clemmons (NC) who shared insights as legislator champions for early childhood workforce issues. Representative Clemmons, who sees herself as a “pollinator” in NC, works to build a knowledge base about early childhood and workforce issues among her legislature as well as broaden a commitment that it is the state’s responsibility to resource early childhood. Representative Senn leverages local university research, the business community, and provider input to advance compensation and early childhood bills in WA.

Hooray moments: We celebrated the news that DC will offer health benefits for the ECE workforce! Starting in January 2023, educators and all eligible employees of licensed early learning facilities will be able to access free, quality, publicly-financed health insurance coverage. [Read more here.](#)

Take-Aways:

➤ **What legislators can do:**

- Actively engaging business communities (especially, chambers of commerce)
- Engaging providers, like doing a program tour, bringing what’s learned back to legislature
 - Ensure policies are actually aligned with their needs

- Training early childhood educators themselves to take lead in the region
 - Unions help get attention of legislators and organize workforce
- Advocates and legislative champions need to be talking to more and different people
 - Create bipartisan connections within legislation like the B-K counsel that Rep. Clemmons formed
 - Convene unlikely allies/groups outside of legislation
 - Form a task force or commission
- Educating Governor's office, school superintendents, and legislature so that key decision makers understand whole B-5 and K-12 ecosystem
 - Mailing Workforce reports to all members of legislature
- Exploring creative solutions e.g. leveraging philanthropy

➤ **Tips for advocates 'making the case' to legislators**

- **Draw on grassroots expertise from providers** to reflect to legislators what the field is saying about their needs and economic situation
- **Find out how much of the state budget went to early childhood** compared to K-12 and higher ed (suggestion to calculate per child spending) and demonstrate how little is spent on ECE compared to other education sectors
- **Link the early childhood benefits with economic benefits;** make sure it's clear that without supporting and compensating the workforce there is no quality B-5 system for children and working families
- **Early learning and early intervention helps reduce special education costs**
 - Must come alongside targeted supports for providers and children with special needs in B-5 system as well; e.g. a complex needs fund or mental health consultant program like they have in WA
- **Unlikely allies:** some are not afraid to work with conservative lobbyists or political strategists to actually reach republican legislatures