

April 15, 2022

Bold on Early Educator Compensation Learning Community
Session # 6: Benefits (paid/sick leave, retirement etc., spotlight on MA, NC, MD)

Overview:

We had a group discussion about access to benefits other than health insurance like paid leave and retirement. We asked targeted questions by role (of advocates, legislators, and agency staff) - which created a robust discussion. We learned about MA paid family and medical leave [legislation](#) as well as stalled efforts to pass retirement legislation, and the recently passed MD paid leave [legislation](#).

Hooray moments: We celebrated that Rep. Clemmons (NC) [spoke](#) at a Duke panel on the need for public investments in ECE and broadening the voices heard at ECE policy tables. Sherry Carlson from Let's Grow Kids Vermont shared that they are hosting an [upcoming press conference](#) in coalition with business leaders from VT.

Take-Aways:

- In our discussion on paid leave, retirement and other benefits, we heard from **advocates** about the importance of:
 - Outreach to non-English speaking and BIPOC communities - needs to be equitable and accessible. Gabriela Quintana from WA shared about the listening sessions her organization conducts with BIPOC community members to learn about barriers to applying for PFL and how the legislation could be improved.
 - Coalition building, especially with other small business owners, is key for building support for legislation

- Advocates can provide data and empower early educators to speak on their experiences with regard to improving policies
 - Other creative ways to provide funding for benefits so they're not just symbolically required but actually funded; for example, WI advocates work with the shared services network who received close to \$13 million in CRRSA and ARPA funds to expand the Release Flood (sub teacher pool) for non-emergency need for substitute teaching (e.g. vacation)
- We heard from **legislators** about the importance of:
- Including actuarial experts from the start of planning
 - Leveraging "light political strongarming" like motivating business supporters or bipartisan support if one knows their state has an upcoming ballot initiative opportunity
 - Working against cultural pushback around pro-worker legislation or fear of the unknown/trying something new by repeatedly providing the data and sound arguments
- We heard from **agency/admin staff** about the importance of:
- Connecting policymakers to frontline providers and educators
 - Being creative about mechanisms for providing benefits like exploring student loan relief, employee assistance programs or, from the agency perspective, requiring benefits in contracts