



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024**

**The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at City Hall, Board & Commission Room #1101, 301 West Second Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.**

**Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse and Members Cormie, Hamilton, McCollum, Menard, and Navarro**

**Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Members Gordon and Schennum**

**Staff in Attendance: Caitlin Oliver, Donna Sundstrom, Rachel Farley, and Drew Ballard**

**PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

The first five speakers to register prior to the meeting being called to order will each be allowed a three-minute allotment to address their concerns regarding items not posted on the agenda.

**There was no public comment.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on November 8, 2023  
**The minutes from the meeting on 11/08/2023 were approved on Member Hamilton's motion, Member McCollum's second, on an 8-0 vote. There was one abstention from Vice Chair Green-Otero.**

**STAFF BRIEFINGS**

2. Updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health (APH), regarding a planning grant from Home Grown to build a comprehensive network for local child care home providers and regarding pre-K classroom start-up funds this fiscal year

**Caitlin Oliver, APH Early Childhood Program Coordinator, shared the following with ECC members:**

- **APH has submitted a grant application for a \$25,000 planning grant from Home Grown to build a comprehensive network for local child care home providers, building on the work of United Way, AVANCE, Inc, and GAVA.**
- **In fiscal year 2024, APH will provide a total of \$128,000 to area school districts in start-up funds for new Pre-K classrooms for 3-year-olds from the APH general fund budget. In past years, these funds have helped districts open 8 new classrooms, while this year's funds will help open 6 new classrooms because the cost of materials districts purchase with these funds has increased.**

### **DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

3. Discuss and approve updates to 2024 Early Childhood Council regular meeting calendar  
**The ECC members approved to move the April regular meeting date from April 10 to April 11, 2024, on Vice Chair Green-Otero's motion and Member Menard's second, on a unanimous 9-0 vote.**
4. Discuss and appoint an ECC member to serve as ECC liaison to the Success By 6 (SX6) Coalition Leadership Team  
**Members discussed taking a vote at a future ECC meeting to appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the SX6 Coalition. The liaison will be required to attend the monthly Leadership Team hybrid meetings at 9 a.m. on fourth Wednesdays. Member Gordon expressed being able to commit to be liaison, starting as early as March 2024. Vice Chair Green-Otero agreed to serve as interim liaison.**

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

5. Updates from related groups (as needed), including Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Austin ISD, Child Care Regulation, Child Inc, E3 Alliance, Success By 6 Coalition, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, and other groups in attendance  
**Brooke Freeland, on behalf of United Way for Greater Austin, provided an update on the Success By 6 (SX6) Coalition. The new SX6 director will be announced at the next Leadership Team Meeting on January 24, 2024. There will be a SX6 Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting on January 25, at 11:30 a.m. at the ACC Highland Business Center. There will also be a virtual option. The coalition plans to release the new strategic plan in April or May of 2024.**

**The Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children shared that registration is now open for the Austin Chapter conference on February 24, 2024.**

**Vice Chair Green-Otero provided an update that Austin ISD has launched a new enrollment process for their pre-K program.**

6. Updates from Margo Kinneberg, UWATX, regarding the cost modeling project of early childhood services in Travis County

**Margo Kinneberg, a project manager at United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX), presented information on the Austin-Travis County Child Care Cost Model, which was a year-long project to analyze the true cost of providing high-quality child care through child care centers and homes. The Children's Funding Project provided technical assistance. The modeling was based on survey data from 56 programs about their revenues and expenses. The tool developed from this project captures how variables such as the age of children served, staffing ratios, number of children served, Texas Rising Star rating, facilities costs, and staff salaries and benefits affect per-child and per-classroom costs, in comparison to child care subsidy reimbursement rates. Key findings include:**

- **Personnel variables account for most costs at both center and home settings.**
- **Infants and toddlers are the highest-cost age groups for providers to serve.**
- **The true cost of care generally exceeds reimbursement rates, particularly as higher quality facilities.**
- **Providers that seek to improve quality and/or increase employee benefits incur further costs that must be made up through external funding or higher tuition.**
- **The annual tuition programs charge is usually lower than the true cost of care.**

**Members discussed ways to continue to track the true cost and recommendations for action based on the project findings. Though this was a one-year project, some trends can continue to be tracked through UT Austin's annual child care market rate study. The UWATX continues to work with the Children's Funding Project to create a list of recommendations. Chair McHorse encouraged these findings to be used to help educate City of Austin officials and the state legislature on the gap between the true cost of care and what programs charge and the reimbursement rates.**

7. Presentation from Gayle Yondorf-Chavez, United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX), and Claudia Zapata, AVANCE, Inc., about the strategies and activities of Success By 6's (SX6) Family-Based Child Care (FBCC) Workgroup and AVANCE's Quality Child Care Matters (QCCM) program which supports and guides family child care educators to learn new strategies that increase the quality of care for children and support families

**Gayle Yondorf-Chavez, Family-Based Child Care Program Manager, presented information about the SX6 Coalition's Family-Based Child Care (FBCC) Workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to recognize, support, and integrate FBCC programs as**

essential components of the ATX early care and education system. The workgroup includes representatives from the Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, Austin Public Health, Austin PBS, Texas Licensed Child Care Association, GAVA (Go Austin/Vamos Austin), AVANCE and seven local FBCC child care providers. Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the workgroup supported a 24-week education specialist home visiting program for FFN providers (family, friend, neighbor providers) through GAVA and supported the Quality Child Care Matters program through AVANCE, Inc. Also in 2023, the workgroup distributed \$2,000 mini grants, through funding from Travis County and St. David's Foundation, to 27 providers to support licensing requirements and home improvements to increase quality rating. In 2024, the workgroup is planning professional development opportunities and a tour of child care homes in the spring for policy makers/local leaders to see what high-quality home-based care looks like.

Claudia Zapata, facilitator of the Quality Child Care Matters (QCCM) program in Austin for AVANCE, Inc., shared information about the program and recent program graduates. The QCCM program supports home-based educators to learn new strategies to increase quality of care and support families. Zapata organizes monthly trainings, provides ongoing mentoring, and facilitates peer support and collaboration. In 2023, 54 providers participated in the program and 42 graduated. Many are unregulated providers. From that cohort, six applied for a child care license and four achieved a Texas Rising Star (TRS) quality rating. The process of getting into the quality system takes time, so Zapata continues to support program participants even after they leave the program with finding the resources or funds for them to finish the TRS process. Some issues Zapata has seen home-based providers face include:

- Charging tuition that is lower than the cost of care because the parents can not afford a higher tuition
- Working multiple jobs to make ends meet
- Barriers to becoming a licensed provider, such as not having a high school diploma or GED

8. Update from the ECC Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup on the Scope of Work and procurement process

Member Cynthia McCollum provided updates on the procurement process for a contractor to conduct the study. The city plans to post the solicitation for a consultant on January 16, 2024. Current estimate is to have a consultant in place for this project in May 2024. The Scope of Work that the study workgroup wrote includes requirements that the contractor communicate with the ECC members regularly about development of the study and the published report. Alejandra Mireles, Equity Office and JIC staff liaison, shared that the

**Commission on Women and the Commission on Aging are also conducting a quality-of-life study.**

9. Updates from the Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) ECC representatives, Leonor Vargas and Eliza Gordon, regarding the discussion at the last JIC regular meeting  
**The JIC representatives had no updates for the ECC members. Alejandra Mireles, Equity Office and JIC staff liaison, provided updates on the JIC's budget recommendations process. The ECC plans to share their budget recommendations with the other JIC commissions ahead of the March 2024 budget recommendations deadline.**

### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**ECC members listed the following future agenda item(s):**

- **Update from Early Matters Greater Austin on the Best Place for Working Parents initiative**
- **Presentation from GAVA about how they are supporting local family-based child care**
- **Vote to establish a budget workgroup**
- **Discussion about action items based on the findings from the local child care cost modeling project**

**Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 10:24 a.m., without objection.**

**The minutes were approved at the February 14, 2024, meeting on Member Alice Navarro's motion and Vice Chair John Green-Otero's second, on an 11-0 vote. Member Tom Hedrick abstained. Member Eliza Gordon was not present at time of the vote.**