



**UPDATE: Summary of November 17, 2016
Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission**

In the second of two scheduled November meetings, the [Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care](#) (BRC) today finalized its list of immediate and long-term recommendations it will make to the state of Vermont to better support high-quality, affordable early care and learning.

Because of the complexities of Vermont's early care and learning system, the Commission acknowledged the need for immediate investment as well as a long-term plan to design and implement a stronger, equitable, high-quality, affordable system.

The recommendations for **immediate** investment were divided into three groups:

1. Financial Access and Stability

The Commission will recommend that the state:

- Increase tuition assistance benefits to 100% for families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL)
- Increase eligibility for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program to 350% of FPL
- Readjust the current benefit scale to fit the new eligibility range
- Increase CCFAP tuition assistance rates paid to providers

2. Capacity and Quality Environments

The Commission will recommend that the state support the facilities fund managed by the Vermont Community Loan Fund, which includes but is not solely funded by the Building Bright Futures (BBF) license plate revenue, and which should also include a minimal annual allocation of at least \$3 million (including both grants and loans). Commissioner Paul Behrman said, "There's a crisis in our state with a lack of infant care," adding that the facilities fund would make a dent in this issue.

3. Workforce

In order to support Vermont's early care and learning providers, the Commission will recommend that the state:

- Establish a range of "outstanding early childhood professional" recognitions that are substantial enough to create incentives to join and stay in the workforce
- Establish and fund a [WAGE\\$ program](#) that gives direct wage support to providers who meet program criteria
- Establish a leadership institute or program to ensure we have strong, ongoing, committed leaders in the early childhood system
- Offer providers support that creates pathways to credentials and licensure
- Establish a scholarship fund that is robust enough to incentivize the pursuit of an early childhood education degree, linking to the TEACH support already in place

The Future for Vermont's Early Care and Learning System

The Commission spent a significant portion of the meeting discussing long-term recommendations and how best to develop a comprehensive, inclusive, voluntary, high-quality, affordable early care and learning system for all children birth to five.

The Commission agreed that further conversation and research was needed to explore and design a system that considers delivery, funding, governance and achieving economies of scale and will recommend that the state's early childhood public/private partnership, Building Bright Futures, facilitates the discussion, that it include representatives from the BRC to maintain the institutional knowledge moving forward, and that the process begins in early 2017 and concludes with proposed legislation to the Legislature no later than 2019. The Commission recommended this timeline in recognition of the urgency of the issue.

How Do We Pay For It?

In order to finance Vermont's early care and learning system, the Commission agreed to the following financing recommendations:

- Reallocate savings from all state agencies through operational efficiencies
- Business and philanthropic community partnerships and incentives
- Early childhood education license plates
- Endowment funds
- Leverage additional funding from Medicaid through Global Commitment Waiver
- Explore options for other revenue sources (with an acknowledgment that commissioners could not come to a group consensus on this recommendation because of the current challenging economic climate)

The Commission has scheduled a webinar for Tuesday, November 22, 8:30 AM–9:30 AM, in order to review changes to the executive summary and to approve the finalized recommendations. The Commission is expected to deliver its report to the governor and Legislature November 28.