



UPDATE: Notes from First Meeting of Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care on September 2, 2015

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Vermont's Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care met for the first time on September 2 to begin laying out a roadmap for their work. Before listing questions to frame their work over the next 14 months, the 17 commissioners told stories from their own lives that have given them insights into the struggles of finding affordable, high quality child care.

"As impressive as it was to see these thoughtful people begin digging into the issues we all care so much about, I have to say that I was simply blown away by the commissioners' personal stories. I think it's a great sign that they started with compelling stories about why these issues are so meaningful to them," said Robyn Freedner-Maguire.

Commissioners heard about the landscape of child care in Vermont from Kathleen Eaton Paterson, Co-Director of the Vermont Insights project of Building Bright Futures, and Reeva Murphy, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, Child Development Division. For example, Paterson noted that what we know about potential demand is that 71 percent of children under age six have all parents in the labor force.

"The data the commissioners saw today paints a picture of a state where people are forced into tough choices that pit what's best for their children against what's best for their livelihood, or against their ability to pay their bills," said Freedner-Maguire. "Even those of us who have been working in early childhood probably learned some new things today. I was struck by hearing about the impact on the 500 members of a Vermont Air National Guard unit."

The impact on the service members was described by Commissioner M. Luke Ahmann, Commander of the 158th Maintenance Group, Vermont Air National Guard.

Commissioners generated a list of questions they'd like to answer to help them understand issues ranging from barriers parents face to finding care to the barriers providers face in trying to offer care.

The commission's next meeting will be in October at a date to be determined. For the latest news on the Blue Ribbon Commission, stay tuned to Let's Grow Kids website.