

February 19, 2021

H.171 Testimony to House Human Services

Vermont Business Roundtable witnesses:

1. Lisa Ventriss, President (South Burlington)
2. Mark Foley, Immediate Past Chair and CEO at Foley Services (Rutland)
3. Dimitri Garder, Board member, and CEO at Global-Z (Bennington)
4. Michael Seaver, Past Chair and President/Vermont at People's United Bank (Burlington)

VENTRISS (3 mins)

- Thank you for the time today and thank you for your leadership on this issue.
- The Roundtable is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of CEOs from Vermont's top private and nonprofit employers, representing geographic diversity and all major sectors of the Vermont economy. The Roundtable is committed to sustaining a sound economy and preserving Vermont's unique quality of life by studying and making recommendations on statewide public policy issues.
- As stated in our letter dated 2.11, this is an issue that the Roundtable has championed for close to two decades.
- Since summer of 2020, the Roundtable has participated in a policymaking conversation with LGK and others to build upon our respective efforts and forge consensus around a multi-year legislative plan to identify and enact a sustainable funding model for 0-5 childcare system.
- In this process, Roundtable has been represented by: Mark Foley, CEO at Foley Services and Immediate Past Chair; Dimitri Garder, CEO at Global-Z, Board member; Paul Millman, Chroma (retired CEO, former Board member); and, Michael Seaver, President/Vermont at People's United Bank, former Chair.
- Today they are here to provide input on the version of H.171 as introduced.

FOLEY (3 mins)

- Following a thoughtful discussion at the Board level, and with the full membership at our annual meeting in January, the 100 CEO members of the Roundtable agreed to a set of principles to guide our involvement going forward, which state:
 - Investments in an ECE system for children ages 0-5 are **essential** to Vermont's economy, and are urgently needed now to grow our workforce and population.
 - ECE investments **must not wait** for the complex reforms that are needed to modernize Vermont's K-12 education system.

- Stakeholders commit to engage in a **prudent, rational, and pragmatic process** to identify a new source of revenue that **must be evaluated and prioritized** according to sound fiscal policy characteristics including, among others, neutrality, and competitiveness.¹ Parties agree to consider all alternative forms of revenues and consider broadened time frames. And,
- Finally, ECE investments and the programs they fund require a governance and accountability system that is embedded with specific **performance metrics and timelines** to ensure that dedicated investments achieve their intended outcomes. **Governance that incorporates meaningful private sector involvement, data-based methodologies, a focus on outcomes, and the discipline to regulate the system is essential to the success of any new implementation strategy.**

GARDER (3 mins)

- It is our last principle that gives us concern regarding the current version of the bill as introduced.
- Sec. 14 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
 - Building Bright Futures shall appoint the 15 members of the advisory committee yet has no seat for the employer community; one seat is reserved for a “community member.”
 - The composition of the Advisory Committee is entirely made up of system vested interests - people who have children, care for children, or regulate those who care for children;
 - If business is to help pay for the 0-5 early care and learning system, the Roundtable believes – as we have articulated clearly – that there should be “meaningful private sector involvement” with representation of businesses of all sizes on the Advisory Committee.
 - We respectfully request that the provision be modified to include multiple business representatives at the table to participate in the governance and oversight of activities.

SEAVER (3 mins)

- Underscore the importance of having guardrails as the Sec. 12 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE STUDY gets under way;
 - Must have business at the table as a legitimate stakeholder representative.
- Thank you, committee members, for your commitment to children, who are at the center of this discussion.
- We’re happy to entertain any questions.