



Date: February 23, 2021
To: Chair Pugh and members of the House Committee on Human Services
CC: Representative Jessica Brumsted
From: Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures, Beth Truzansky, Deputy Director, Building Bright Futures
Re: H. 171: An act relating to the governance and financing of Vermont’s child care system

Executive Summary

- 1. Section 12 - EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE STUDY:** Building Bright Futures affirms the need for this study section. BBF is the appropriate organization to execute the governance study. BBF needs appropriate funding (\$200,000) to execute the scope of work required. Based on lessons learned from the process and timeline for executing the Blue Ribbon Commission, I strongly urge the committee to consider a longer timeline with findings reported at least 6 months to one year later.
- 2. Section 13 - EARLY CHILDHOOD FINANCING STUDY:** This work will be led by the Treasurer and the Joint Fiscal Office. BBF does not have a role in this study. It is separate from the scope of work required in Section 12.
- 3. Section 14 - EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** The State Advisory Council is not the appropriate body to execute this section of the bill. As written, an ad hoc/time-limited committee is requested to provide child care-specific guidance to DCF and CDD while the governance study and necessary infrastructure is updated/designed. The BBF Early Learning and Development VECAP Committee currently supports CDD in a similar manner. BBF can transition this committee’s current charge to also support the role requested in Section 14 of H. 171, which will involve additional meetings, administrative and facilitation support, and additional committee membership as outlined in the bill. BBF will be able to execute the role named in Section 14 of H. 171 for the \$25,000 allotted annually for the duration of hosting the specialized committee (through 2023).

Dear Chair Pugh and members of the House Committee on Human Services,

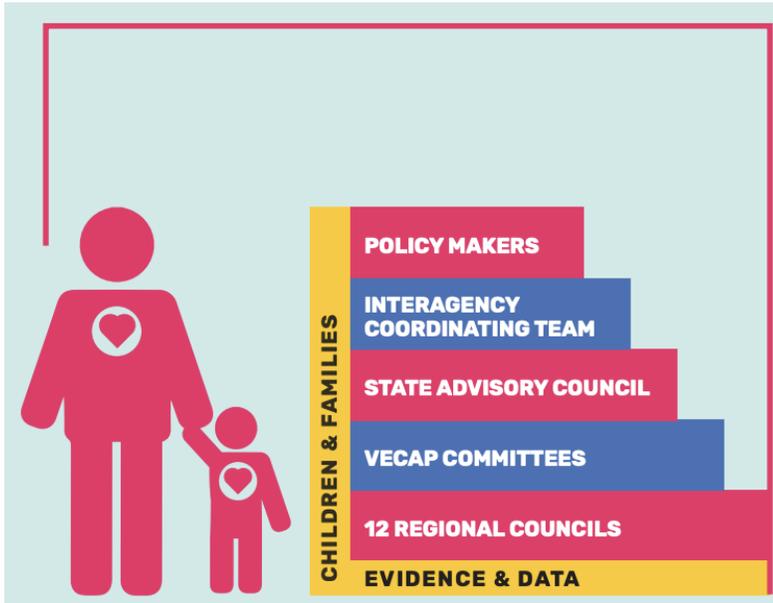
I appreciate the discussion over the last week on H. 171 and the components of the legislation where Building Bright Futures has been asked to execute a role. This memo is to provide clarification on BBF’s charge under Act 104 and BBF’s capacity to fulfill what is proposed in H. 171 based on questions raised during discussion by committee members on Friday, February 19. The memo includes a more comprehensive description of the infrastructure of the Building Bright Futures Network and outlines our ability to execute the roles required in Sections 12 and 14. Updates to our original testimony are in red.

Building Bright Futures’ Infrastructure and Role in Vermont’s Early Childhood System

BBF is Vermont’s early childhood public-private partnership charged under Act 104 to serve as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood, the mechanism used to advise the Governor and legislature on the status of children in the prenatal period through age eight and their families. BBF’s mission is to improve the well-being of children and families in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing

voices together across sectors and within regions to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve. BBF maintains the vision and strategic plan for Vermont’s Early childhood system.

BBF’s infrastructure includes a network of over 450 early childhood stakeholders that come together monthly to support the work of the broader system:



12 Regional Councils

At the base of the pyramid in bright pink (visual on the left), is 12 regional councils that bring together partners across sectors on a monthly basis to identify the gaps, barriers, and challenges faced by kids and families. These tables also support the development of innovative strategies to fill gaps and respond to meet the needs of the region.

7 Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP) committees (listed to the right)

Each VECAP Committee is responsible for upholding and monitoring a

component of Vermont’s early childhood strategic plan to inform strategy and identify where we, as a state, have made progress. Each committee has a concrete charge that is dictated either by the VECAP goal and/or by grant funding. Each committee is staffed by volunteer public and private co-chairs with support primarily from the BBF Deputy Director.

Committee membership are all volunteers and come from public and private partners who participate in monthly meetings.

Descriptions of each committee can be found [here](#).

Vermont’s Early Childhood State Advisory Council (SAC)

The State Advisory Council (SAC) brings together cross-sector early childhood leaders 8-11 times per year to issue

VECAP Goal	Committee
Goal 1- All children have a healthy start	Child Outcomes Accountability Team
Goal 2 - Families and communities play a leading role in children’s well-being	Families and Communities Committee
Goal 3 - All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs	Early Learning and Development Committee
	Professional Preparation and Development Committee
Goal 4 - The early childhood system will be integrated, well-resourced, and data-informed	Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Team
	Early Childhood Investment Committee
	Data and Evaluation Committee
VECAP committees are supported and informed by the State Advisory Council, BBF Regional Councils, and a host of EC committees and work groups.	



recommendations, increase coordination to advance a connected and evolving early childhood system, and advise the Governor and Legislature on the well-being of children and families across Vermont. SAC membership is designated through Act 104. The SAC can currently include up to 23 governor-appointed members across public and private early childhood leaders and stakeholders. The most recent SAC meeting held on February 22nd included over 225 stakeholders who came together to discuss early childhood policy and discuss systems integration.

BBF informs this infrastructure by identifying and presenting the most up-to-date high-quality data. Our regional and statewide infrastructure allows BBF to have a presence in every corner of the state and in all communities. This network allows for the communication and escalation of barriers, and challenges and recommendations from both regions and from the State Advisory Council to policy makers. As decisions are made, the BBF infrastructure facilitates changes to the Early Childhood system to improve the lives of children and families across the state.

Considerations for H. 171 Section 12, page 14-16

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE STUDY

BBF's ROLE: BBF has been named to undertake an analysis that evaluates and makes recommendations regarding early care and education governance, the results of which will be reported to the General Assembly by January 15, 2022. This is an important topic worthy of formal study and critical to supporting children and families statewide and BBF was initially created for exactly this purpose; to have the flexibility and robust infrastructure to adapt to emerging legislative, community, public and private early childhood needs. The Blue Ribbon Commission laid the foundation for this analysis. This work is in line with our mandate under Act 104, our mission of using evidence and data to inform policy, and our neutral convenor role. BBF is well-poised to execute this analysis.

FUNDING: In order to execute a task of this magnitude we need financial resources to support additional staffing and a contractor. The request in section 12 of H. 171 is comparable to the state's previous work in 2015-2019 to execute the Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality Affordable Child Care, which included the need for additional staff and the hiring of a contractor to support the work. The Blue Ribbon Commission also took place over one and a half years, resulting in critical information consistently referenced by early childhood partners and the legislature. We ask that you consider the following financial, staffing, participation implications:

- **A 1-time expense of \$200,000 to (1) hire a contractor** to support project management, administrative tasks, meeting facilitation, synthesis of meeting/focus group notes, report development and legislative testimony and (2) to support **BBF staff time to oversee all aspects of the study** (planning, agenda development, facilitation guide development and facilitation support, coordination and organization of planning teams, attendance at working group meetings, participant outreach, report writing, ongoing legislative testimony).

TIMING: We ask that you consider an extended timeline. Analyzing the early childhood education governance and administrative infrastructure is important. The current timing would require all meetings, interviews, focus groups, data compilation, analysis, recommendation development and drafting a final report to happen within a 6-month period, which is not sufficient. BBF is committed to a full and high



quality process to secure a contractor, allocate appropriate BBF staff time, and to ensure necessary participation of agency leadership and statewide partners in focus groups, interviews/meetings, and surveys. **Based on lessons learned from the process and timeline for executing the Blue Ribbon Commission, I strongly urge the committee to consider a longer timeline with findings reported at least 6 months to one year later.**

BBF affirms the need for this study section and believes in our ability to execute this work successfully if appropriately funded. We appreciate the committee's willingness to consider additional resource allocation for this bill.

Considerations for H. 171 Section 13 - EARLY CHILDHOOD FINANCING STUDY

This work will be led by the Treasurer and the Joint Fiscal Office. BBF does not have a role in this study. It is separate from the scope of work required in Section 12.

Considerations for H. 171 Section 14, page 20-23 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BBF's ROLE: The bill as proposed names BBF to develop and facilitate a new "Early Care and Education Governance and Administration Advisory Committee" to advise the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division on services pertaining to child care and early education regulation. As otherwise noted, BBF has the process expertise to convene and facilitate this group. Currently, BBF maintains 7 Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP) Committees with consistent participation from many, if not all of the stakeholders required in the proposed membership of the Early Care and Education Governance and Administration Advisory Committee. BBF is the right entity to convene this group. It is important for BBF to review the existing committee infrastructure and work toward improved efficiency, effectiveness, and integration and not duplicating efforts.

The committee's discussion on Friday, February 19th, asked questions about the existing BBF State Advisory Council serving as the committee overseeing Section 14 of this bill. Although we are amenable to reviewing membership of the State Advisory Council under Act 104 in addition to updating the content of the Act, we do not see the SAC as the appropriate body to execute this section of the bill. As written, an ad hoc/time-limited committee is requested to provide child care-specific guidance to DCF and CDD while the governance study and necessary infrastructure is updated/designed. The BBF Early Learning and Development VECAP Committee currently supports CDD in a similar manner and is partnering with CDD to review and provide input during the process of completing the 3-yr CCDF state plan. With financial support, BBF can transition this committee's current charge to also support the role requested in Section 14 of H. 171, which will involve additional meetings, administrative and facilitation support, and additional committee membership as outlined in the bill. We are confident in our ability to bring together the appropriate stakeholders and to provide this advisory support while completing the governance study in Section 12.



FUNDING: BBF will be able to execute the role named in Section 14 of H. 171 for the \$25,000 allotted annually for the duration of hosting the specialized committee (through 2023).

Thank your consideration of these topics and for continuing to keep children and families at the center of our decision-making.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Morgan K. Crossman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Morgan K. Crossman, Ph.D., M.A.
Executive Director, Building Bright Futures
(802) 881-1264
mcrossman@buildingbrightfutures.org