

The Children's Cabinet
Monday, February 29, 2016
DOA Conference Room A
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Meeting Minutes
Approved

Members in Attendance: Elizabeth Roberts, Chair; Ken Wagner, Vice Chair; Michael DiBiase; Jamia McDonald; Nicole Alexander Scott, MD; Maria Montanaro, Melba Depena; Jim Purcell and Scott Jensen.
Absent: The Honorable Gina Raimondo; Regina Costa, Esq.

❖ **Call to Order and Agenda Overview:**

Secretary Roberts called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 25th meeting. Director Jensen made a motion to approve and Commissioner Purcell made a second motion. Secretary asked the Cabinet if there were any comments or amendments to be made to the minutes. There were none. Secretary asked all those in favor of adopting the minutes, all were in favor, 0 opposed. Motion passed and minutes were adopted. Secretary Roberts stated that the focus of today's meeting is the Fiscal Year 17 proposed budget, and she thanked all of the department's fiscal staff for their participation in pulling the information together and Dacia Read for taking the lead on this process. The Secretary provided some context on the Governor's \$8.96 Billion Operating Budget Proposal and stated that within that proposal are proposed operating budgets and policy recommendations for each state agency including the agencies represented on this Cabinet. The Secretary stated that this information is available through the Governor's Open Budget website and a thorough review of proposals was recently published by our partners at RI Kids Count for more information. The Secretary stated that today's meeting will focus on just a handful of the items included in our proposed agency budgets that will forward our shared goals for children, youth and families. The Secretary added that all of the proposals included in Governor Raimondo's Jobs Budget collectively forward a significant economic and health and human services agenda that will support family and community stability as people move forward; and the items that are discussed today are not the only proposals that support children and youth in Rhode Island. These items are just a few that are either new or otherwise related to the Cabinet's shared objectives to be discussed as a group.

Secretary Roberts stated that Dacia Read is currently working with the Office of Management and Budget to develop a fiscal mapping exercise that will allow us to use resource maps and engage in more coordinated budget development in future years.

❖ **FY17 Early Care and Education Proposals**

The Secretary reported that as the Cabinet was drafting its strategic plan this fall, RIDE released PARCC data indicating that only 38% of third-grade students in Rhode Island were meeting expectations in reading. It's an important outcome measure and that level is concerning. There is general consensus that children who are not proficient readers by grade three are much more likely than their peers to struggle through school and drop out of high school.

When we launched our five-year strategic plan, we articulated our shared vision for children between the ages of 0-8, which includes:

- Reaching appropriate early developmental outcomes
- School readiness, regular school attendance
- Safe and supportive home and learning environments

Indicators like third grade reading tells us that we have a lot of work to do to reach these goals. Secretary Roberts added that Governor Raimondo shares our concern, and joined Rhode Island's Grade-Level Reading Campaign, further demonstrating her commitment to ensuring that Rhode Island's children gain the skills that matter most. By investing state dollars into Rhode Island's Early Care and Education systems, the Governor's FY17 Budget Proposal supports progress toward improved early care and education outcomes. Specifically, it proposes investments that will improve access to early care and education; improve quality and outcomes; and make data-driven system improvements. This year the Children's Cabinet will work together with the Governor to ensure appropriate leadership and oversight over the State's early care and education system as Federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds expire. The Secretary stated that she has spoken with Commissioner Wagner and the EOHHS Directors, and understand that the services we provide exist along a shared continuum, and that our systems and standards must align to achieve the desired outcomes that we share. We have some work to do to get there, and it is really important for us to get that work done in a coordinated effort.

Secretary Roberts asked Commissioner Wagner and Director DePena to outline some of their critical budget proposals that will help us step forward toward our shared goals for our youngest children.

Commissioner Wagner reiterated Secretary Roberts comment about 38 percent proficiency rate of our third graders haven't met expectations in literacy, and when you look at the student sub groups, the numbers are different. We are clearly in the wrong order of magnitude as the data shows in the following groups:

- 22 percent of black students have met expectations
- 18 percent of Hispanic students
- 10 percent of students with disabilities
- 8 percent of English learners

We know that third grade is a critical mark and things start to change in terms of the way instruction is delivered and the outcomes, including everything from dropout rate, to future incarceration all just turn in the wrong direction. Proficiency as a proxy measure can also mask the nuances around students who may struggle with dyslexia for example, there may be students that are on proficiency but not reading the way you expect them to because they have very specific learning disabilities. We have a lot of work to do and we need to bring in as many comprehensive supports as possible, starting with families and the early learning workforce. The Commissioner stated that he recently met with staff from Providence Talks to discuss the protocols that they use to explain the kinds of patterns of verbal and literacy and back and forth that goes on or doesn't go on in terms of various environments that kids are in. As students come into the K-12 system and really looking at what happens in K-3, we know that the pressure on the system is at grade 3 when the tests come in, but if we wait for the external pressure that comes in from the tests, then we are too far behind.

Commissioner Wagner stated that we need to build on the work that we have done in the past five years with the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, with the partnerships that exists across various agencies, as well as with BrightStars and the Exceed initiative. Commissioner Wagner added that the Governor's budget includes funds to continue expanding the Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program with 360 more seats for a total of 950 statewide. The budget also includes funds to bring 100 percent full-day kindergarten to every Rhode Island community as well as funds to continue the development of our kindergarten-readiness assessment.

Commissioner Wagner stated that we need to begin to look at how we re-imagine schools – not just high schools, but schools from the earliest grades. There is an engagement issue that we need to tackle and too many children by grade three are already “checking out” or disengaging. Our systems are not built the way kids minds and emotions work; the way they explore and learn. We are taking a hard look at what it means to rethink the way we do schooling, what does it mean for a more integrated hands-on learning experiences; project based; problem based and what does it mean to introduce technology as a way to work on engagement, presenting

information and tracking progress. That work very much factors into the early learning work as well as the entire K-12 spectrum.

Finally, if we are going to execute on that vision, we will need to take a look at how we can empower the teachers, principals and families who are closest to the kids. Principals and teachers should be able to make key decisions about teaching and learning, while parents and families should have access to more options and opportunities for their children. Commissioner Wagner stated that RIDE is going to advance a proposal to allow for inter-district choice for families to send their children to other schools than the district that they happen to live in. This will resolve the problem of forcing children to move to another school simply because they have moved from one address to another, that rule has created devastating effects on children all across the state. Inter-district choice will also allow for more diversity among the schools. We know children learn best when they are in more diverse learning environments, it makes the children stronger, more creative and passionate about the work they are doing. The only way to have a school integration strategy that doesn't involve forced bussing or thirty years of trying to change housing patterns is to open up options for inter-district choice. Where urban schools can have the empowerment and autonomy to build dynamite programs and people can have the option to send their children to those schools.

Commissioner Wagner concluded his comments and asked Director DePena to highlight her Department's proposals.

Director DePena thanked the Cabinet, advocates, stakeholders and partners who have been so engaged in this conversation of early childhood education. DHS continues its long commitment to connecting children and families to safe and high-quality child care options, and the Governor's proposed budget includes significant investments toward that end. The proposed \$70 million child care budget adds \$11.3 million (\$7.9 from general revenue) to grow our Starting Right Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in line with caseload estimates. We are very thankful to the Governor for her investment. This money will allow us to serve approximately 1,600 more families in need of quality child care as they return to the workforce, as well as, support the implementation of our new Child Care and Development Fund State Plan. The CCDF Plan will provide equal access to child care, continuity in eligibility, and growth in our childcare quality improvement activities, which served as a starting point for much of Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge work. DHS will continue to work and support child care providers as they work to improve quality.

Director DePena stated that the second item reflected in the Governor's proposed budget is \$1.1 million in funds to DHS to continue the work of the Race to the Top, by offering high quality professional development and college coursework to the early care and education workforce; provide additional funding for child care providers to make needed improvements to their facilities; and to offer other quality supports and incentives as providers work to improve their BrightStars quality rating. Director DePena added that the Tiered Reimbursement structures for childcare providers also play a role in incentivizing quality improvements, by helping providers afford the high cost of quality, and to attract and retain skilled teachers. The Governor has indicated to the General Assembly her interest in exploring the tiered reimbursement structures provided appropriate revenue estimates later this year. The tiered reimbursement plan has a few options, and the financial impact differs significantly among the options, therefore we will do an assessment to understand which one best fits Rhode Island at this time, and we will continue to keep this group and Early Learning Council and all the partners updated on the progress.

Secretary Roberts asked if there was any public comment or question specific to the Early Care and Education discussion.

Ann Grant of the Parent Project asked in regard to the early childcare, is there any assurance that children are in lead safe homes?

Director McDonald stated that DCYF has a backlog of homes that cannot meet the licensing requirements because of the lead issue, which also reduces our access to foster families. DCYF just held a LEAN process for

its Licensing Division and through their reorganization the department will free up funds to start investing in those homes and work with the Department of Health who has the funding. Our intent of expansion is to make more dollars we already have available to help with licensing the foster families who are inhibited by the lead issues.

Dr. Alexander Scott added that DOH has received funding to continue the process through our lead centers for the reactive prevention that can occur once lead levels are high enough. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the coordinated efforts across the agencies on this issue as well.

Brother Michael Reis from Tides Family Services expressed a concern to Commissioner Wagner about the children with special needs, or who are developmentally delayed that seem to get lost in the education system, and how some of them can't get into the vocational education. He added that they have developmentally delayed kids who are severely retarded that are integrated in regular classes. One example is a young woman who was extremely developmentally delayed was assigned to regular classes and she did not attend school for six months until we got involved and were able to access a lawyer to assist in transferring her to one of the special education schools and is now doing quite well. Brother Michael reiterated that he wanted to bring awareness to this population of children who need assistance.

Commissioner Wagner stated we are expanding options for high quality career technical education, which needs to be distinguished from the traditional vocational education in the ways that it opens up options for students as opposed to closing down options for students. It is a factor of best practice and federal law that we need to look at these restrictive environments so it may be completely appropriate that a student with severe needs is in fact placed in the inclusion and integrated type settings with proper supports. The Commissioner added that school districts have an obligation to follow federal and state law, and if there are instances where school districts are not following law, of course we would want to know about it.

❖ **EOHHS - FY'17 Budget Proposal**

Secretary Roberts thanked the public for their comments and continued to discuss the EOHHS FY17 Proposal, stating that in addition to DHS and RIDE, under the EOHHS umbrella, the Executive Office, DOH and DCYF also contribute to our early care education system. The Secretary stated that the biggest part of the EOHHS budget is Medicaid and to support parity in access to early development supports that improve school readiness, we have introduced legislation through the Governor's budget article that requires that commercial insurance providers to set payment rates that are equal to or greater than Medicaid rates for early intervention services. This would also ensure children with commercial insurance have access to some of the services that are so important to the DCYF and Medicaid kids. One of the other proposals we have is the Children's Health Account. This account is used to support services that can be coordinated at the state level more effectively than independently by the various insurers, but it is also about services that are needed for privately insured kids which tend to bump over to the Medicaid budget. We have been exploring a number of areas, behavioral health is one particular example of an area that we have a real focus on making sure the children get the services they need regardless of payer, and we have some work to do in that area.

That proposal is in the budget, and there is a lot of inter-connection here, and some of it is very basic, but it's about making sure our services wrap around the families and children of the state so that we are seeing some of the success that Commissioner Wagner talks about in terms of success as our children age. The Secretary also stated that there is a new automated eligibility enrollment process that we see as a real opportunity, because it is a place that a family can come in and become aware of all of the services and supports that are available in a much more coordinated and comprehensive way rather than entering through different doors and programs. We see some real opportunity in terms of family support that can have benefits elsewhere in the system.

Secretary Roberts stated that there has been a lot going on in the Medicaid program and a lot of engagement from people involved in services for children, and she gives credit to the predecessors in her role as Secretary as well as the advocates here that we start from a place of real strength in Medicaid with the number one program

in the country with outcomes for kids. We are now looking at how we can continue to transform that program, and there have been some appropriate and strong voices raised about making sure we do that right. Kids Count, RI Parent Information Network and PCMH-Kids leadership have all been talking to us about how do we provide services in the right way for children and support those services through Medicaid. We have been managing a budget and doing it without cutting eligibility or benefits and we are looking how to do things better and move people to less intensive environments, support them in their homes and make sure they are getting the services they need. That will continue to be a dialogue with the community.

Secretary Roberts reported they have proposed an additional \$35 million in savings next year, half of it being efficiencies through UHIP and the other half is through a new package of reforms, in getting initiatives to scale, and to make sure they are working effectively, and continue to do quality improvement. Some of the biggest changes that the constituencies here will see is around children with special health care needs and reconnecting their services to the rest of their covered services through Neighborhood Health Plan and United Healthcare and making sure that the Cedars programs become a case management partner in the community, not in the same way that they were as a mandatory one in the past. It's a system in transition and working to integrate PCMH-Kids as well so that families are finding the resources and supports they need, especially children with particularly challenging needs, and having an impact early is incredibly important. A good early intervention enrollment beginning at three months can have major impacts in terms of how the children age and grow through the school systems. The Secretary stated that she looks forward to ongoing dialogue and thanked the advocates who have continued to make sure that we are keeping quality and families at the center of that conversation. The Secretary asked Dr. Alexander Scott to give a briefing on the Department of Health's Budget Proposal.

❖ DOH - FY'17 Budget Proposal

Dr. Alexander Scott stated that the Department's budget proposal is \$163 million and the focus continues to be on families as we look at ways to improve the experience for children in Rhode Island and the families that support them. The majority of the budget is federal funding, and it is important to highlight the alignment with the children's cabinet goals on being physically healthy and safe; behaviorally able; academically empowered and career ready. Part of the department's proposal also supports stable families and communities. The budget includes funding for Early Childhood Development initiatives including home visiting. This year the department proposes to use \$10 million to continue to grow and support evidence-based home visiting services. We have reached more than 1400 families during this past year with three evidence-based home visiting programs and this upcoming year we hope to connect 500 more families.

Dr. Alexander Scott stated that the department's second largest step in the proposal aligns with one of their major priorities which is reducing disparities. One of the most disturbing disparities we see in the state involves our infant mortality rate. The infant mortality rate among African Americans is almost double to the infant mortality rate of Caucasian babies, and it is important to acknowledge that it is across social economic facets, it does not matter what the education or social economic status is. We have included appropriations that will help us build a comprehensive plan to address African American infant mortality which definitely requires collaboration across the agencies as well as with our community partners. The department has also proposed funding to the System of Care Coordination for children and youth with special needs. We know with both of those examples that disparities in access and quality of care exists for children across the board, particularly those with special needs, and while we have launched our new and improved Cedars service model that we'll look to support this year, we know there is more that we can do.

Dr. Alexander Scott stated that an additional component of the department's proposal, highlights improving system coordination across a variety of health systems: physical health, oral health and also behavioral health. That includes addressing suicide prevention, and \$771,000 in federal funding has been committed to support connecting at-risk youth to mental health services through the Youth Suicide Prevention Program. Through this program, DOH will train young people, educators and organizations serving youth to refer the at-risk children to mental health services.

Dr. Alexander Scott stated that \$336,000 has also been committed to promote positive adolescent development through a comprehensive and coordinated school-based health program, and the partnership with RIDE will be beneficial.

Dr. Alexander Scott stated that in regard to lead poisoning prevention and partnering with Barbara Fields of Rhode Island Housing, \$595,000 is being proposed to reduce the impact of lead poisoning on children's growth and development and to continue the work that the department has been doing. Dr. Alexander Scott added that \$164,000 has been proposed to promote evidence-based tobacco cessation statewide. With these two initiatives, we will continue to aim at eliminating exposure to toxic substances so that serious health impacts on the children can be reduced effectively.

Dr. Alexander Scott concluded her presentation on the department's budget proposal by stating that \$2.6 million has been committed to support KIDSNET, Rhode Island's population-based integrated child health information system. This database coordinates services, improve care delivery and make data driven decisions.

Dr. Alexander Scott asked if there were any questions or comments.

Darlene Allen from Adoption Rhode Island asked Dr. Alexander Scott if she could elaborate on the \$32,000 that is proposed to reduce disparities.

Dr. Alexander Scott stated that she would really like to bring that topic back to another Children's Cabinet meeting to expand further and have a more in depth discussion. A lot of work has been done within the departments, but there needs to be more of an expansion across the state in terms of addressing infant mortality and connecting with the resources that already exist in the state.

❖ **DCYF - FY'17 Budget Proposal**

Director McDonald reported that DCYF's budget proposal is \$216 million and stated that Dacia did a great job in highlighting where each of the departments budgets hit on their strategic plans so you see how the agencies plans are lining up with the Cabinet's priorities. Director McDonald stated that in regard to Early Child Care, DCYF is working with DHS through the Child Care Development block grant funds that they receive, where those funds are supporting DCYF by maintaining the child care licensing capacity which were previously supported by the Race to the Top grant. We know we have some improvements to do to elevate how our licensing standards achieve that, and we continue to support those FTE's as well as maintaining the Early Childhood Project Director position to support Getting to Kindergarten.

Director McDonald reported there is \$1 million from General Revenue committed to implement a rate increase by \$3.00 for generic and kinship foster care subsidies. Our board rate was approximately \$14.00 and we are now up to \$17.00 and as we continue to reengineer and find efficiencies within the system, we hope to continue to raise that, so that the \$1 million remains in our budget proposal to continue to help with kinship and generic foster care subsidies so we can continue to recruit great families for all of the children in our system.

Director McDonald stated that the bulk of the department's budget goes to the children and this year as you may know has been about the Department's System of Care and how we want to expand all of the home based services and reduce our reliance on congregate care. Most recently within the last month we created a Permanency Division, including a Central Referral Unit to process all residential and home-based referrals. Also, there will be a re-procurement of all service contracts over the next several months, beginning with the community based as we continue to look at rates and understand how we need to support our partners in the community to have more affordable services.

Director McDonald stated she is very proud that the Governor added Article 23 to the budget, which establishes a Safe Harbor Law to ensure that child victims of sex trafficking are not prosecuted for prostitution, are treated

as victims and receive services. When I began at the agency, we had 68 children that were absent from care and now we are down to 20. We know that is our at-risk population for sex traffic victims.

Director McDonald stated that the final budget proposal of \$200,000 is committed to provide Higher Education Assistance Grants to eligible youth and former foster youth up to age 23 who attend URI, RIC or CCRI on a full time basis. Director McDonald concluded her remarks stating that DCYF is fortunate to have all of the proposed budget funds dedicated to the children.

Dacia Read reported that Secretary Roberts had to leave for a meeting, and asked Director DePena to discuss her department's budget proposals.

❖ DHS- FY'17 Budget Proposal

Director DePena stated that the proposed budget for DHS is \$597 million, and in addition to child care proposal she spoke about earlier, one of the Department's priorities is the RI Works Program, including the procurement of new vendor services over the next two months. In addition, DHS has continued to build on redesign work of the RI Works Program. The redesign looked at many aspects of the program, including the work participation rate which is the way we are evaluated by the federal government. We are one of the worst in the country in terms of keeping families engaged in work activities. The Department is currently going through a process that will reengineer the work flow of what the families need to do. We found there were too many hand offs within the department, there was no follow through and somehow along in the process the families got lost. Therefore we were not being successful in putting families back to work. Director DePena stated that there is approximately \$9.5 million that is dedicated to improving outcomes which includes the launch of a RI Works Service Center Pilot in partnership with the Department of Labor and Training that will provide integrated motivational interviewing, targeted assessment strategies, supportive family services, career exploration, and career pathways. Ten DHS staff will be located at DLT and we will streamline the eligibility part of the program and concentrate on the support services that families need to get a job. Director DePena also stated that they will be looking at how DHS is spending the money the funding that is dedicated for TANF to understand how the department could better serve the families and increase and improve outcomes. Director DePena asked if there were any questions or comments.

Patricia Flanagan from Hasbro stated that while DHS is looking at TANF, will there be an ability to better track when families come off the TANF program. There has been somewhat a lack of ability to follow what happens to the families once they are off the TANF program.

Director DePena stated that is a great point, and families that are coming off the program as we have seen in caseload trends, we know that we are not putting them in a job, so what happens to those families is the question. We are working with different universities to see if the data tells a story as to what is happening to them. Through work with the Coalition Against Homelessness, we are looking at the data of how many of those families in recent years engaged in the program, in addition, we are working with Brown University to look at DHS internal data to understand and conduct surveys with families to find out what happened with the children and families once they were off the program due to timing out of the system. Director DePena stated that there is legislation that would increase the time that the family could stay on the program while the program is being fixed.

Marty Sinnott of Child and Family asked Director McDonald for some clarification around the budget and it looks like expenditures are projected to be \$6-7 million less than they are this year, while in the midst of a reorganization of the System of Care redesign.

Director McDonald reported that DCYF has reduced its reliance on congregate care by 11.5 percent and about every four percent reduction is approximately \$800,000 even after reinvestment in community base. The Director's Approval Process (DAP) trend took us from 561 children down to about 460 children and even with

them in community-based or at-home services, it is a dramatic cost difference for us, so the projection line of our costs is actually trending down with the same volume of kids and without cutting rates. Based on DCYF's initiatives to put the children in the right level of care for their acuity, DCYF is saving money naturally. Jamia stated that could follow up with Mr. Sinnott with a line item breakdown, but reassured there have been no cuts in services or rates. Jamia also added that there was a population change in children out of state, it went from a population of approximately 90 children down to 79, and a majority of those have been less expensive in-state alternatives and we are starting to see our case closures go up. Jamia stated that she would be happy to give a more detailed budget breakdown at the next meeting for the Coalition for Children and Families.

Lisa Guillette of Foster Forward applauded the Higher Education Assurances Grants that are earmarked for the former foster youth and stated it is absolutely critical for their higher education participation. Ms. Guillette also added that in regard to the Commissioner's comments about the inter-district school choice opportunity, a few years ago, there was a joint legislative task force that looked at some of the impediments for educational success for young people in foster care and educational placement stability was a critical one. So as we look at kids who are exiting foster care, a federal law was put in place a couple of years ago to provide assurance for consistency for that population, yet we still have an existing statute in Rhode Island that defines placement for school, based on where the placement happens in foster care. For many young people who want to keep that continuity, it becomes a challenge, and when thinking of that population of 38% that are not meeting the reading expectations, as well as the disparity groups, anything we can do to use the inter-district school choice option to bolster stability for kids in foster care, will pay dividends for us.

Commissioner Wagner stated that Ms. Guillette made a great point. Commissioner Wagner asked Director Montanaro to present the budget proposal for her department.

❖ **BHDDH - FY'17 Budget Proposal**

Director Montanaro stated that BHDDH is primarily focused on adult services for the most part, however, there are two areas of intersection with children. The first area is providing prevention and treatment to the adolescent youth population to help prevent their use of drugs and alcohol and to treat substance abuse disorder. Funds from the Substance Abuse Block Grant through SAMSHA will be directed towards those programs which have been longstanding and quite successful. Director Montanaro stated that the second area of focus is the transition of youth who have serious emotional disturbances or have developed mental illness, into the adult services that are provided in the state, as BHDDH does not provide those services directly with the exception of hospital service level of care, the department is the regulator and provide a lot of policy level development for the mental health community. Director Montanaro added that the department works very close with Medicaid in the development of services and programming for people with serious mental illness and children who have developmental disabilities as they transition from youth to adulthood.

Commissioner Wagner added that it is another example similar to foster care, where we found that because substance abuse services are typically coupled with students who are general education students, sometimes getting into those types of programs can be a barrier and if we can open up the system to allow parents to find places where their children can be best served.

Dacia Read informed the Cabinet that Regina Costa, Child Advocate was unable to make today's meeting due to being in court, however, the slide for the budget of the Child Advocate's Office as well as all of the departmental budget slides will be posted on the Children's Cabinet website. Dacia asked Director DiBiase to present the budget proposal for his department.

❖ DOA - FY'17 Budget Proposal

Director DiBiase stated that the Department of Administration is essentially the support service to the other agencies and one of the larger functions of the department is the Office of Management and Budget and everything discussed here today comes through that office. Director DiBiase stated that there is a \$40 million general obligation bond to support production and preservation of affordable housing. This housing opportunity bond is meeting a big need which is housing and it will leverage 4-1 prior to federal money for each dollar of state investment and it will also provide construction jobs. Rhode Island in general has not been a strong funder of housing programs from state general revenue funds, therefore it is done through bond issues such as this one. Director DiBiase stated that the other budget proposal is the Earned Income Tax Credit, a big priority for the Governor. Last year the Governor had increased it from 10% to 12.5% and this year it has been expanded from 12.5% to 15% of federal the credit. Director DiBiase stated that although relatively small on average it's about \$318 per family, it actually involves approximately 85,000 families and will cost on an annualized basis about \$5.4 million. Director DiBiase concluded his budget proposal presentation and stated that the budget proposal for minimum wage, which is another major priority for the Governor, has been raised from \$9.60 to \$10.10 per hour by 2017.

❖ RIDE - FY'17 Budget Proposal

Commissioner Wagner reported that the total recommended budget proposal for the PreK-12 education is \$1.35 billion, of that amount, \$893 million will go out to local communities to school districts through the Funding Formula work. The following is a breakdown of how that money is distributed.

- \$42.3 million for all public schools
- \$2.5 million to support students learning English. There is a growing body of students that have unique language acquisition needs that require fiscal support. But rather than just provide new money, there will be quality assurance protections in place to be sure that the services that are being provided actually go to English language learners and in conformance with best practices.
- \$4.5 million to support special education students. This is one area that the school districts struggle with this area with students who may come into the system whose needs are so intense that in order to best serve the student, it may put severe fiscal strain on the underlying operations of the school district.
- \$5.2 million to support the additional 950 high quality Pre-K seat expansion.
- \$6.2 million to support the school districts affected by our current school choice charter school systems, whether it be a unique reallocation of costs from charter schools to school districts or additional funds for the six communities across the state that have a five percent or greater percent of their students going on to charter schools. That is a combination of new state funds and reallocated charter school funds.
- \$569,629 to support the Early Learning System Quality and Sustainability. \$350,000 is earmarked for the kindergarten entry program and to provide informative assessment information to best serve children as they come into kindergarten; as well as the maintenance of 3.25 FTE's for RIDE.

Commissioner Wagner added that in regard to innovation and empowerment, \$1.75 million has been committed for leadership development for teachers, principals and emerging leaders. This also includes funds for instructional fellows, for teachers to come out of the classroom for one to two year sabbaticals and do statewide leadership work around understanding best practices and standards-based instruction. Commissioner Wagner stated that \$1 million has also been committed for planning grants to help schools kick-start school empowerment programs.

Commissioner Wagner stated that \$500,000 in state funding has been committed for statewide free access to PSAT and SAT information to get students college ready. Another \$1 million has been committed for dual enrollment, which allows the student to take a college course while in high school. Commissioner Wagner also reported that approximately \$900,000 from a combination of different sources, has been committed to support district access to providing advanced course work. We want more students to have access to the kinds of dual advanced coursework that only students in accelerated programs currently have access to including dual and concurrent enrollment, but not limited to AP, International Bachelorette, access to high quality dual language programs, advanced courses in the arts, advanced courses in STEM, and in order to support that work, we are building a network to have districts collaborate with each other for those kinds of processes.

Commissioner Wagner concluded his presentation and asked Commissioner Purcell to present the proposed budget for Post-Secondary Education.

❖ OPC – FY'17 Budget Proposal

Commissioner Purcell stated that Higher Education in Rhode Island is currently being funded at the 1964 level. Commissioner Purcell stated that Higher Education has been cut about 50-55 percent from state budget across the country, and Rhode Island's budget had been cut about 63 percent. Commissioner Purcell stated that they are using the money wiser, one instance is the Rhode Island Promise Last Dollar Scholarship, rather than giving \$300 scholarships for books, etc. they have been able to leverage that by looking at all the aid packages. For example we used to get about 42 percent of all the kids that received a Pell Grant that could have tuition fees and books paid for, now by leveraging the dollar and using Last Dollar Scholarship in a wise way, we now have 91 percent of all individuals on the Pell Grant having their tuition fees and some books paid for. Commissioner Purcell expressed his appreciation that the Governor increased the aid by 25 percent, which is the largest increase in a long time. Commissioner Purcell stated that in regard to the dual and concurrent program, there was a big increase there with 3,086 kids in high school taking college level courses and we are excited about getting them engaged and thinking about their future. Commissioner Purcell stated that the Governor has committed to providing additional state support for tuition, which is important so we can keep tuition down to encourage access and affordability.

❖ DLT – FY'17 Budget Proposal

Director Jensen reported that DLT's budget proposal is \$420 million with the majority of it going to unemployment insurance, which is by far the largest part of the Department's operation. There is \$4.1 million in federal WIOA funding to support youth services and the 14 youth centers around the state where youth can go to get ready to enter the workforce, such as taking academic assessments, training, resume writing, as well as help with putting together job applications.

Director Jensen also reported that there is \$2.4 million to supplement the Job Development Fund, which is supported by a small assessment to companies that comes out of the unemployment insurance tax that subsidizes and pays for the following youth workforce development activities:

- \$1.5 million for summer youth employment
- \$500,000 for YouthWORKS411 Centers. Some youth, for one reason or another, are not eligible for WIOA, therefore, this program makes sure that every kid in Rhode Island who wants to have a summer work experience, is able to do so.
- \$400,000 for new youth initiatives, largely an initiative to subsidize work experiences for CTE students and occupational skills for out of school youth.

Director Jensen stated that funding has been committed for young adults and adult workforce development as well, and \$4.4 million has been committed to support Real Jobs RI, which funds workforce intermediaries to

work directly with companies to put together training programs that will get people into jobs that currently exist in our most thriving industries. We have 26 partnerships with approximately 196 companies involved and we are really seeing a lot of creative work done by these partnerships. Director Jensen added that \$2 million is committed to support the Tech Hire Initiative to connect low-income job-seekers with high-paying tech jobs through innovative training programs.

Dacia Read added that at the next Children's Cabinet meeting Director Jensen and his staff have agreed to speak more about WIOA and the state plan for WIOA which does have to consider some of the requirements of working with disconnected youth that many of the agencies in this room work with, particularly with the 16-24 year old population.

Commissioner Wagner asked the public if there were any questions or comments for the Cabinet.

Kathy Kushner from BHDDH asked Director Jensen if there would be any job development proposed for persons with developmental disabilities.

Director Jensen stated that Real Jobs RI has a real opportunity in this context. There are a number of companies in Rhode Island already doing a great job, CVS being one of them, in helping put folks with developmental disabilities in meaningful jobs within their organizations. The Department hopes to put together a Real Jobs RI partnership with those companies and expand that initiative and train folks with developmental disabilities into positions that will work for them.

Tammy Russo from Family Voices of Rhode Island stated that when DLT does develop the workforce for developmentally disabled, she asked that there be a concentration on access. As a mother of a young adult on that same search and his adult support program is having trouble making partnerships to enable him to get into the workforce. Ms. Russo also added that in regard to the BrightStars program, are there incentives for centers to take children with disabilities and special health care needs. That is an issue that we hear a lot about in Family Voices, as families can't go to work because they have no place to send their infant who may have feeding tubes and shunts to be cared for.

Dacia Read informed Ms. Russo that she can connect her with Director DePena's office to further discuss the BrightStars program.

❖ **Adjournment:**

Commissioner Wagner asked if there were any further comments or questions. There were none. Commissioner Wagner stated the next Children's Cabinet meeting will be held on Monday, March 28th. Director Alexander Scott congratulated Dacia for doing a tremendous job in pulling all of the Budgets together for the cabinet. Commissioner Wagner thanked everyone for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn. Director McDonald made a motion to adjourn, Director DiBiase seconded. All were in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.