

The Children's Cabinet
Monday, October 31, 2016
DOA Conference - Room A
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Meeting Minutes
Approved 12/5/16

Members in Attendance: Elizabeth Roberts, Chair; Ken Wagner, Vice Chair; Michael DiBiase; Jennifer Griffith; Scott Jensen; Jim Purcell. **Absent:** The Honorable Gina Raimondo; Rebecca Boss; Melba Depena; Jamia McDonald; Nicole Alexander Scott, MD.

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

Secretary Roberts called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. The Secretary asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 26th meeting. Director Jensen made a motion to approve and Director DiBiase 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 Cabinet will continue the Children's Behavioral Health conversation next month with a presentation from DataSpark which has been conducting a service mapping exercise for us. Moving forward, the Cabinet will also focus efforts on the Governor's Third Grade Reading Goal and Children's Behavioral Health to refine the action plans in these areas. Today there will be a presentation from members of the cabinet who have been working together to improve employment outcomes for young adults and families.

Academic and career readiness were one of five outcomes identified that we can work collectively to improve. Commissioner Wagner, Director Jensen and staff from the Governor's Workforce Board will discuss the work that they are now launching on this effort. Secretary Roberts turned the meeting to Commissioner Wagner.

❖ **New Skills for Youth – The Path to Career Readiness**

Commissioner Wagner reported that the Governor, himself, Director Jensen and staff went to Washington, DC last week to propose a funding grant specifically around integrating the economic development work, the workforce development as well as the education sector work in a coherent strategy around K-12 and Higher Education. There is an opportunity in education with the type of skills that employers are looking for, such as the ability to take complex information, understand it, synthesize it; form and express an opinion orally or in writing; collaborate with others, and social emotional skills are not only what employers want, but are also the things that families want for their kids. Also, having the opportunity to do advanced challenging course work for kids in a way that tackles the relevance and engagement issue that is powerful for our students whether or not they engage in their course work or not.

Commissioner Wagner stated that Rhode Island was hit hard during the recession and it took a longer time than some of our neighboring states to come out of the recession, part of the reason was a misalignment of our workforce, education and economic development initiatives. We have a unique opportunity because we have a lot of proof points about the things we have done already that align into this work, however, they are not yet pulled together in a system. The proposed grant is \$600,000 per year for 3 years, and will continue to move forward with this work even if the state is not awarded the grant. The application process required a needs assessment to focus on the strengths and difficulties. Part of our strengths are such that we have a lot of enthusiastic partners around this work and folks at the table, in government, business and employer sector and nonprofits. As we are a small state we can work through a lot of issues that the bigger states have to work through, but on a much smaller scale. We have leadership that is all talking about the same kinds of initiatives such as mixed delivery models where different providers will provide different sets of services at different times depending on the context of need, there is no one-size fits all for provider arrangements, whether it's the Health and Human Service sector, Education sector, Workforce Development sector, etc. We have a rich array of initiatives that have been put into place around the space of integrating economic development, workforce development and education.

The following are several examples of those initiatives:

- Real Jobs RI where training is part an ecosystem based on context.
- P-Tech program where students come in at 9th grade and at the end of six years they not only get a high school diploma, but an associate's degree as well as a first in line job opportunity with an industry partner. There are currently three industry partners – Electric Boat; Senedia; and The Tech Collective and IT Group.
- Computer Science for Rhode Island (CS4RI) work with different providers serving different needs depending on context as well as a training model for teachers to rapidly scale up the ability to teach computer science in all schools to also include kindergarten, first and second grades.
- Career and Technical Education Board and Trust which is reallocating funds for CTE programs to high growth high wage job sectors as identified by the Governor's Workforce Board.
- Career and Technical Education Fellows where teachers come out of the classroom and serve as ambassadors with their colleagues in this work across the State.
- Electric Boat partnership with six CTE Centers and comprehensive high schools working with Electric Boat as they staff up for the next generation of building submarines.
- Career and Technical Education open enrollment, where any student can go to any CTE program in the state at no additional cost, which has been in place since 2012.
- Prepare Rhode Island program where students can get access to dual or concurrent early college enrollment and earn credit for their eventual associates or bachelorette degree.
- Advanced Course Network for high schools that cannot staff the type of courses that they want to provide on their own, can voluntarily participate in a network of private and public colleges, non-profit organizations as well as other school districts at no cost to the schools or the students.

Commissioner Wagner stated in regard to the Dual and Concurrent Enrollment work, students can take courses from their public colleges, CCRI, RIC or URI and get credits for those courses in ways that are transferrable for matriculated programs.

Commissioner Wagner reported that there have been a few gaps identified in the process. Historically we have focused on training people as opposed to coordinating with employers and with the business community to find out where the demand is. Therefore, we need to move to a much more demand based set up as opposed to just increasing supply. In short, we don't want to help students be prepared for jobs that don't exist, they should be prepared with the knowledge and skills that will be aligned to the jobs that are going to exist.

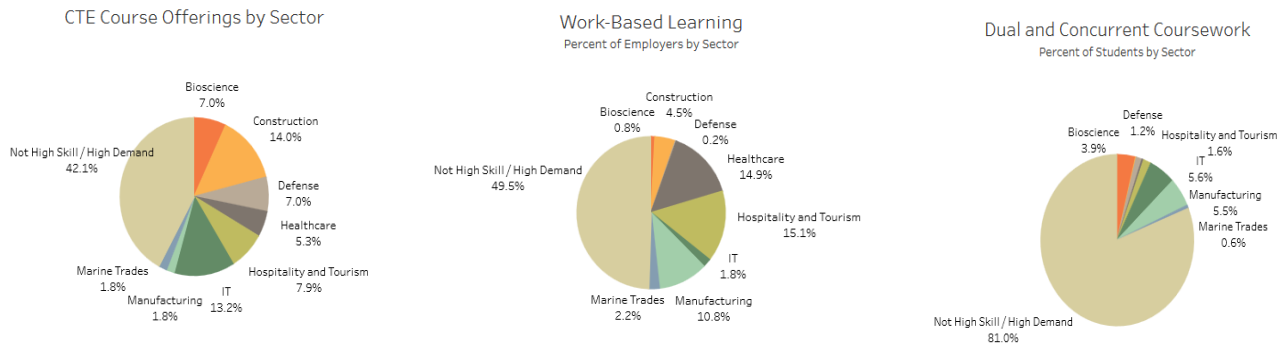
Barriers have also been identified around opportunities that exist, however, they may not exist for all students in all places. There could be a student in a CTE center who gets access to these programs, but are not getting access in a comprehensive high school; or it could be a student enrolled in a comprehensive high school, but that particular high school does not have access to all of the CTE programs. Therefore we need to be sure to tackle these barriers to access.

Another gap identified was across K-12 system, adult education, higher education, workforce development and economic development our systems are not aligned and not necessarily pushing on the same things. To align the system, we need to not only remove the barriers, but also set up workflow processes as well as incentives.

The last gap identified was around the perception of entrance into a CTE program that somehow your options are being limited to being prepared well for one specific field, as opposed to being offered a set of knowledge and skills that will prepare the person for many opportunities. In moving this work forward, we will need to tackle that perception and approaching career readiness not just for the 27% of our students who formally enrolled in CTE programs, but for all students to open the issues of engagement and relevance in a way that blends the academic preparation with the hands-on experiential preparation. We need to help families understand that they should demand these kinds of services because they will have career and life relevant experiences that will prepare them for the future.

Despite universal access to CTE coursework, there are too few students accessing high-quality career pathways. Last year, students having 100% access to the programs, only 27% of Rhode Island seniors took advantage of the program and were career pathway completers. Of those students who participate in these programs, there are dramatic disparities in terms of the students who participate. There are too few students of color and economically disadvantaged students accessing coursework aligned to high-skill, high-demand careers. Statewide there are 60% white students and 40% minority students in coursework participation. There is a disproportionate lack of access to these kinds of programs and we need to tackle the equity and disparities issues.

Commissioner Wagner discussed the existing career pathway opportunities that are not aligned with high-skill, high demand sectors in the state and added that Rhode Island’s high-wage high growth sectors are different than they might be in other parts of the country.



Director DiBiase asked Commissioner Wagner what types of jobs were in the large percentile of the non-high skill/high-demand section.

Commissioner Wagner stated that those jobs for example may be manufacturing or automotive that are not advanced and linked heavily with IT. Cosmetology is another example. When we look at the growth sectors those types of jobs are not in the growth categories.

Director DiBiase added that we need to train people for those careers, but it is also matter of where we are putting our investment priorities.

Commissioner Wagner stated that as they realign the funds, they are not touching the funding formula, so if school districts still want to offer programs in the non-high-wage/high-growth sectors, they can still use the funding formula to do so. There is still a robust part of the money for the school districts to use the money as they see fit, but the discretionary state dollars will be used for high-cost and innovative CTE programs to reallocate funds towards high-wage/high-growth sectors.

Commissioner Wagner continued his presentation adding that the first part of the plan is to focus on demand by engaging employers in the business community to communicate to us through processes that are responsive to their needs coupled through our work with the Governor’s Workforce Board. For example, Real Jobs RI, where they are doing placement in the hands-on workplace environment.

Director Jensen stated that the employers such as Electric Boat, Senedia, etc. are really interested in working with the CTE programs in the public school system and the universities to give students an opportunity to see what is out in the economy first hand. Some students may not want to be a welder at Electric Boat or work in technology and it’s important to expose students to these opportunities and self-exploration.

Commissioner Wagner added that the state is committed to providing career education opportunities for all youth through the blending of career relevant skills. This begins with exposure in upper elementary and middle school, rather than starting at the 10th grade level when the youth don’t have enough information to determine what exactly their interests and passions are. The model would also expand access in high school to credentials that a relevant whether they are industry credentials or the accumulation of college credit, as well as hands-on internship and apprenticeship experience.

The graduation requirement regulations have recently been updated with a pathway endorsement, so there is no reason why a student couldn't come out of high school with a pathway that is tied to their particular area of interest with career relevant skills that are demonstrated as part of that pathway.

Commissioner Wagner added there is a strong equity piece as well, where the state has been paying for student's access to dual and concurrent early college enrollment and are one of the few states that have been allowing students to take as many credits as they want while they are still in high school at no additional cost. This year's budget proposal will also include paying for up to three AP tests per student. We will also be looking at Diploma Plus which is a student who graduates not only with a diploma, but with advanced credentials, whether it be passing AP tests or having access and accumulating credit for college. In order to ensure the equity of those opportunities, not just in high school, but through the K-12 system, we are looking at accountability models where we would identify a cohort of kindergarten children and look at where they are in 5th grade, as well as look at a cohort of 5th graders as they move into high school and see where they are in the types of courses they are taking. We don't want to wait until the outcomes materialize or don't materialize in high school when it's too late if we have equity gaps. This will track equity patterns all the way through K-12 as the students come into the system.

Commissioner Wagner stated that improvement in the indicators below should lead to these transformative outcomes:

- Established and productive employer partnerships with the K-12 system.
- Increased and equitable participation in career pathways.
- A coherent and aligned system that values career preparation.

Indicator	Baseline (15/16)	Expansion Year 1 (17/18)	Expansion Year 2 (18/19)	Target Year 3 (19/20)
Schools with career awareness and exploration programming	N/A	25%	50%	100%
High Schools that offer work-based learning opportunities for credit	~10%	25%	50%	100%
Postsecondary credential or certificate earners	44%	50%	66%	75%
CTE Program Participants	~27%	35%	40%	45%
The percentage of students who earn a Career Pathway Diploma Endorsement	27%	35%	43%	50%
The percentage of students enrolled in post-secondary programs or working in a high-skill, high-demand sector 12 months post-graduation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Secretary Roberts inquired as to how we get at the equity issue and what is being measured.

Commissioner Wagner stated that there are two ways to help target equity, one is more of a cross-sectional approach and the other is a longitudinal approach. The cross-sectional would be in each of these metrics to disaggregate and look at whether there is a disparity impact. The second is the longitudinal analysis where we track students in a system way, we hold schools accountable for students to have these opportunities when they move from elementary school through high school.

Commissioner Wagner reported on the following early wins that position the state more effectively on executing its action plan strategies:

Establishing opportunities for business involvement:

- Reconstituted career pathways advisory committee with employer leadership
- MOU with RIPEC to analyze funding streams
- Employer-led professional development with K-12 and post-secondary educators

Better aligning the career preparation system:

- Revised postsecondary articulation and transfer policies
- Execution of data-sharing agreement

Providing career education opportunities for all youth:

- Committed to valuing career readiness outcomes in school accountability and report cards
- Partnership with LaunchMyCareerRI

Creating a sustaining demand for career education:

- Developed and executed Phase 1 of a PrepareRI Communications Plan

Commissioner Wagner discussed planning for long-term sustainability and legislative alignment.

- Programming built from the ground up—responsive to educator feedback, employer demand, and student interest
- Office of Performance Management to track progress
- Review and institutionalize the theory of action through legislation
- Career education outcomes in the state’s ESSA plan
- Ensure legislative and stakeholder buy-in
- Build long-lasting demand through high-quality programming, information, and choice
- Realign funding streams to ensure that one-time grant funding and funding streams aren’t only source of supports through MOU with RIPEC for three years

Commissioner Wagner concluded his remarks and turned the meeting to Dacia Read.

Dacia Read introduced Heather Hudson from the Governor’s Workforce Board to share additional information about the board’s direction in moving forward to implement the New Skills for Youth Plan.

Heather Hudson, Interim Executive Director of the Governor’s Workforce Board, reported on Rhode Island’s economy and workforce stating that our unemployment rate has dramatically decreased, however thousands of Rhode Islanders are still unemployed or under employed. Particularly around the conversation today, the unemployment rate for Youth 16-19 is about 20%, (the youth population also includes persons up to 24 years of age). These are youth who are in high school or just graduated high school who are looking for work.

Employers in Rhode Island still struggle to find qualified workers. As a result of a survey that the GWB conducted with the employers over the past few years, we know the two greatest barriers face in hiring middle and high-skill positions are lack of job-specific technical skills and lack of relevant work experience. The number one request from surveyed employers is to strengthen educational programs that prepare students for jobs and careers in high-demand occupations and industries. These findings tie in with Commissioner Wagner’s presentation about the New Skills for Youth Plan work.

Heather added that part of the work with Real Jobs RI is working more closely with our industries, and from the defense sector alone, 91% of companies have difficulty hiring to support their workforce needs. In order to make Rhode Island competitive and continue to improving the economy, we must focus on specific high-growth, high-wage industries. The Brookings Institute research highlights some of the new and growing industries and they clustered a lot of the industries together to show these advanced industries, for example, the biomedical innovation is one industry that we see some of the most growth in where almost 50% of those jobs are good paying. These are not necessarily the industries of the past, when we think of defense ship building and maritime, it’s not just going to learn how to sail a boat, it’s about the technology that goes into navigating the boat, or the technology that goes into making the materials on that boat. One of the factors we see is that technology is underlaid throughout most of the industry now as we look to the future.

Heather reported that more jobs in high-growth, high-wage industries will require more technical skills and advanced degrees. By 2020, more than 70% of Rhode Island’s jobs will require some education beyond high school, yet right now only 43% of Rhode Island adults have an associate’s degree or higher.

Secretary Roberts stated in regard to the 43% of Rhode Island adults with a degree, what does the percentage look like for adults under 30 or under 40?

Heather stated that she did not have those statistics with her. Heather continued her presentation reporting that we can see a skills gap by looking at the open jobs and job-seekers. Looking at occupational groups such as computer & mathematical or healthcare practitioners & technical, for some occupation groups there are up to twelve times as many job postings than there are qualified unemployed workers for those positions. That is the high-level frame of what we are talking about on a day-to-day basis when we talk about where are the jobs, where are the people looking for jobs, what are the skill sets of those people, what is needed in the employers that are growing and hiring, and what role does the Governor's Workforce Board serve. The Governor's Workforce Board is in statute and is charged as the primary policy-making body in workforce development matters for the State with statutory responsibility and authority to plan, coordinate, fund and evaluate workforce development activities in the state.

The GWB consists of 21 members representing business, labor, education, community and government who establish workforce development policy and plans. The members also serve as the State Workforce Investment Board to oversee the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and to oversee how the federal funds are invested and disbursed and the policies associated with them.

Heather discussed Rhode Island's demand-driven workforce delivery map reporting that the Governor's Workforce Board serves as a close coordinating body between state agencies who receive federal funding for workforce programs, such as the One-Stops and Adult Education as well as many other programs. Heather also reported that there are a lot of outside provider organizations that are also doing very important work that supplement the workforce pieces as well.

The Governor's Workforce Board invests in all Rhode Islanders from youth through adulthood. For example, over the past two years GWB is helping more than 25,000 individuals with \$24.6 million federal funds awarded to ensure they get their credentials, get them work ready, work experiences, as well as doing direct job placements.

Heather reported that the GWB has had some recent plans that has provided direction that highlight the skills gap, call for action to respond to employer's needs, and invest in creating career pathways for youth and adults:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Action (2016)
- New Skills for Youth Plan (2016)
- Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (2015)
- RI Senate's "Rhode to Work" Action Plan (2014)

The Governor's Workforce Board Biennial Action plan will be building off of this work in order to meet employer and growing industry needs, advance the skills of Rhode Islander's and strengthen coordination within the workforce. The following four areas will get us there, these are not separate funding streams or separate programs necessarily, but rather thinking about that we have to start where the jobs are and what the employers and industry needs are, therefore we start with:

- Demand-Driven and Strategic Investments – align investments with Brookings Industry clusters demand-driven and strategic investments to meet employer demand, establish a pipeline of skilled workers for future demand and ensure particular populations are prioritized.
- Career Readiness and Pathways – advance a career pathway strategy to provide employment, education, training and support services for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment that will ensure an opportunity to develop their education and skills to prepare them for a job at various points in their life.
- Align Policy and "Networked" Government – align and leverage existing government structures and resources so that government is "networked" and coordinated to achieve efficiencies and effectiveness throughout the workforce system.
- Data and Performance – analyze investments as it relates to high-growth industries evaluate performance to measure return on investments, and use data to guide future investments and policies.

Heather concluded her presentation stating that the GWB is working to make government move at the speed of business and it's something they are prioritizing and is included their action plan going forward.

Commissioner Wagner stated the challenge for us is whether workforce development and early childhood can coexist in a coherent way. Commissioner stated he believes they have to.

Director Jensen added that he believes they need to coexist as well, stating to gain academic skills, you need to see how things apply and how things work in the world and go back and forth between theory and practice and have them inform one another, that's how people learn.

Commissioner Purcell stated that in hindsight it does work because the bureau of labor statistics will show you that the jobs will go where the skill sets are.

Secretary Roberts stated the other struggle we have is the numbers we are looking at of people who are underemployed and unemployed, many of them do not fit into this skillset of matching jobs. What do we do with people that are 25 years and above who don't have the skills to succeed in this economy and who are a growing number of who we are serving in our various offices. The Secretary stated she understands the future for the economy is high-skill high-wage, but we have a significant number of people who don't match that right now.

Commissioner Purcell stated that in Rhode Island there are actually a lot of adults who do have good skills, but are not credentialed in any way, so anything we can do to help assess what skills sets they have and give them industry credit or college credit would be a benefit.

Director Jensen stated that sometimes the problem is that the person had lost their job and they may have a two-year gap in their resume, and nobody is willing to validate that those folks in that circumstance are really good employees. We have a number of programs aimed at getting those people, finding out their situation and helping them present their challenge.

Director DiBiase stated that this readiness gap is a national concern, is Rhode Island worse off or better off, we have an influx of low skill people that other parts of the country do not have. Though we have made tremendous progress over the years, how are we different, because we have been dealing with the skills gap for several years.

Director Jensen stated that the first thing to recognize is the skills gap problem is nationwide and a big part of it is the changing nature of global competition and technology in the workplace, and not just the IT jobs, but every job.

Heather Hudson added that in the 18-35 age bracket of Rhode Islanders as compared to Massachusetts and other neighboring states, has a higher number of individuals in that age bracket without a high school degree or credentials needed. Trying to make learning contextual as well, is a new direction that follows under the Career Readiness and Pathways area.

Secretary Roberts added the population growth is in the places where our schools are most challenged, if we are thinking about our future, we need to make sure we are measuring in the places where the young people are coming from.

Commissioner Purcell added that when businesses come to a particular state, they are looking for a city that has good schools, good hospitals, and has access to good colleges. In Rhode Island in general we have a disadvantage with a lot of the older communities and run down mills. We need to address that issue by investing in a community that businesses would be attracted to.

❖ Public Comment

Dr. Patricia Flanagan stated she is excited to hear about the hands-on learning, and suggested that social-emotional wellness be included. The ability to work in groups, collaborate, listen to each other, and have self-reflection and mindfulness to be physically and mentally healthy. When looking at Toxic Stress in adolescents, its trouble with trusting people and trouble with collaborating which are the skills that you need in a future workplace that are impacted. Unless we build that into our system, we are still going to leave out some very vulnerable populations.

Commissioner Wagner agreed with Dr. Flanagan, and added that he believes the only setting that can really address social and emotional skill development is in an integrated contextualized setting where students are developing those social emotional skills in the context of support and challenge. The model needs to be intentional about the challenge raised, and the model is actual the place that is best poised to do it.

Dr. Flanagan added that it also challenges the system to put physical and mental health supports into our school systems, colleges and all of our training sites because it is something that needs to be taught and used in everyday life. Some kids will need additional services and we need to think of integrating and being intentional about providing those services to young people.

Commissioner Wagner added that for example in our workforce development, just because we are focusing on Real Jobs RI, it doesn't mean that we ignore the fact that people have basic literacy needs and basic language acquisition needs, it means we still provide those supports, but provide it in the context of getting people back on their feet and into a job. Similarly in education, we need to prioritize those providers that can provide unique services that nobody else can in the social-emotional space.

Lisa Guillette of Foster Forward added that in regard to disparities and when thinking of the 5.5 million disconnected young people in the country who are not in school or who are not working, there is critical mass of kids who grew up in child welfare. It's the social-emotional piece, the kids with the high ACEs scores, and the kids who were in juvenile justice. To ground this issue back to the Children's Cabinet table, the question was asked regarding what indicators tell us if Rhode Island is faring better or worse than other states. That story for us can be told through our child poverty rate and the rates at which youth in our state experience juvenile justice or foster care. There is a real opportunity for the Children's Cabinet, particularly through our state's implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to focus on the subgroup of youth in foster care particularly. Our state never fulfilled the promise of the 2008 Fostering Connections Act at the federal level, which was to achieve school stability for kids in foster care. Rhode Island still determines the educational placement for children in foster care according to where they are placed when they come into care as opposed to their district of origin. Lisa also stated that we don't know how our foster children are doing as a group academically, and suggested that the Cabinet look at the cohorts of children in foster care to measure whether they are on grade level. There currently is no data sharing agreement between state agencies that enables us to collect this data that ESSA is going to require of us to really know how those kids are doing moving forward. Lisa concluded by encouraging the Cabinet to focus on implementing the ESSA requirements for education stability, staying in the same school, having a dedicated point person, coordinating transportation, ensuring rapid enrollment and record transfer, and data tracking. The state has recently convened a group of stakeholders as an ESSA Implementation Team of Practitioners, perhaps they could add some child welfare practitioners to the group. Paying closer attention to the subgroups that experience the greatest disparities will lift us up a lot quicker.

Marty Sinnott from Child and Family Services commented on how funding is aligned for kids in the child welfare system. There seems to be a disconnect as there are only two residential campus settings in the state, but in terms of whose responsibility it is to fund, and who is evaluating performance is not clear. Also, in terms of trying to create specialized programs for kids in the child welfare system, it is really impossible to do in this state. There is an overlay of rules and it doesn't appear that in terms of performance, evaluating outcomes or how from a policy perspective we can straighten these things out. The state is deficient in a number of specialized programs, so how do we evaluate, and how from policy point of view streamline funding to achieve the right outcomes.

Sue Pearlmutter from Rhode Island College School of Social Work suggested that given the speed in which things are changing in our economy and technology, starting with kids in middle school is not nearly soon enough. There have to be ways to introduce the concepts of skill development and training for work tasks at a much earlier age. Sue stated she works closely with the Central Falls School District and reported that when Electric Boat came to the district and wanted to start working with high school kids, many of them could not pass the drug and alcohol tests and many of them had skill deficiencies that didn't make it possible for Electric Boat to do the kind of recruitment they had hoped to do in the district. We cannot wait until someone is twelve and already experimenting with drugs, alcohol or other substances which happens in communities where there is already economic turmoil.

Stephanie Geller from Kids Count stated in regard to equity, how does transportation or the lack thereof, affect the ability to participate in dual enrollment, advanced coursework network and as well as other programs and how may it be addressed.

Commissioner Wagner concurred and stated they are reviewing the current law to determine what it allows and doesn't allow, as there are different rules for to-and-from school and then there are different rules from within school. They are looking at ways to get fewer students on smaller vehicles that are safe and driven by the proper credentialed people so they can move from program to program. Commissioner Wagner added that the Department of Education does do statewide transportation contracts and they will be reviewing them to rebid the contracts to be more conducive to smaller vehicles, as well as making targeted updates to the underlying statutes.

Secretary Roberts asked if there were any further public comment. There was none.

❖ **Adjournment:**

Secretary Roberts stated the next Children's Cabinet meeting will be held on Monday, December 5th. The Secretary thanked everyone for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn. Director Jensen made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Purcell seconded. All were in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.