



**Board of Directors Meeting
September 11, 2020
10:00 AM-12:00 PM**

This meeting was held via teleconference due to COVID-19 concerns

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members present: Bob Buesing, Wil Blechman, Allison Davis, Gege Kreisler, Larry Pintacuda, and Linda Stoller

Staff Present: Phyllis Kalifeh, Kerri Cloud, Denise Bishop

Welcome:

Chair Bob Buesing welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 10:12 am. A quorum was present. There was a brief discussion on how COVID-19 has impacted travel and connections with family (especially new grandchildren) and friends.

Reading and Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from June 12, 2020 were reviewed and approved (L. Pintacuda motioned to approve/W. Blechman second). Larry said that he is working his way through the Children's Forum policies and is currently working on Human Resource policies. He is impressed with the quality and thoroughness so far.

Mission Minute (*Opportunities for Board members to be emissaries of the Forum's mission*):

Gege shared that she is concerned with the lack of implementation of CDC guidelines in many early learning programs in the Tampa Bay area. She is aware of some restrictions at drop off and pick up, however, based on her experience, programs are not closing with identified cases in classrooms and there are few mandatory quarantines in place. She sees a crisis emerging in Florida as programs are just desperate to keep their programs afloat with the lights on. She said that it will be critically important for the Children's Forum to keep the developing situation on our radar. Phyllis added that this appears to be consistent with what is happening throughout Florida. Bob added that he was "channeling Chris Card" in saying that we need to establish an active role for the Forum in this situation. Bob is very concerned for the children of this state. Enrollment is down in many programs, and positive outcomes for children will undoubtedly be impacted. He acknowledged our advocacy role, but asked what else the Forum can do to address the crisis. He suggested we write some Op-eds, create parent outreach campaigns, clarify publicly the benefits of attending quality care versus keeping young children at home etc. Larry agreed and added that he is worried about the limited access to activities that promote

socialization for young children. Gege said that the Forum carries a “brand” throughout Florida that is well respected and as such, we should take the lead in sharing research about the benefits and potential risks of enrollment, attendance, quarantine and safety issues. In particular, Gege said that children in Pasco County were already not entering kindergarten “ready” and she is afraid this is going to create even more dire circumstances for children.

Will shared some findings from an Aspen Report on losing childcare, which was just released, and said that we need collaboration at a state and national level. He shared that family stress is another significant layer that is directly impacting children. He thinks we need to push Congress to act. Phyllis shared that the Forum is part of state (EL Consortium) and national (National Women’s Law Center; Child Care Aware) groups that are actively involved in advocacy around these issues. She is not sure if Congress understands the severity of the crisis in child care and early learning. The message needs to be focused on the role child care plays in getting our economy and education systems running again. Wil agreed and reinforced that we need to move toward editorials and perhaps radio spots. Gege agreed and suggested we need to build a network of collaborators and reduce perceived silos. Bob made several suggestions including outreach through webinars, Op-eds. Wil asked how we can be sure that children would be better off in child care programs. He is concerned about social liability if we promote enrollment and attendance without the research to support that it. Phyllis suggested that rather than recommend blanket attendance as the correct response, we may want to consider providing support for the decision-making process highlighting the pros, cons, and issues for families to consider.

Larry brought up another concern related to families and child care program directors completing required forms to access financial resources. He knows they can be challenging and wondered if there were supports available to facilitate the processes. Phyllis said that the Florida Family Child Care Home Association (FFCCHA) has provided outside support for just this type of activity. She added that several Forum staff were trained to provide support to those who requested it. Phyllis suggested that there is clearly a need for a comprehensive list of current resources designed to help small businesses with the PPP application process. Gege agreed and said that at first, those processing applications in Hillsborough County were being very rigid with the process but have since become more accommodating. Phyllis said that she believe the key is to ensure that child care and early learning teachers are recognized as essential workers. Once recognized as essential workers, additional financial resources are available to the workforce. This has been declared in Ohio, but Florida is not there yet. Bob asked if families are even aware of available subsidies. He added that the Florida Business Alliance is working hard on these specific issues and while their goal is to eliminate poverty in Florida by 2030, there are urgent needs now that call for policy change. Phyllis offered to draft an Op-ed to send out to board members that they could use as a starting point. The focus would be on outlining the advantages and disadvantages of participating in child care programs during the pandemic.

Linda said that it appears the public school systems have made sure communication is current and in the forefront; however, the ECE system seems to be less active in their messaging. She suggested that there should be more public attention to child care centers that are following CDC guidelines and are operating safely and successfully. Gege said that she is concerned with not only the health of the children and families that attend her program, but also the health of her employees.

Linda also recommended that we develop some clear talking points to share with legislators about the dire financial impact and the resources needed for child care programs throughout the state. Finally, Bob suggested that in addition to the Op-ed template, we might want to consider holding a webinar with a panel discussing the impact on child care programs and what can be done about it.

Chair’s Report: Bob Buesing:

Bob said that his report was covered in the previous section (Mission Minute) but he did add that the Florida Chamber has recognized the importance of early care and education and this is a significant step for Florida.

Nomination Committee: Larry Pintacuda:

Larry shared that Ted Granger has officially joined the Children’s Forum Board. Ted will be a major asset to our strategic planning and progress. Larry also raised the concern, as he has in the past that the Board is definitely lacking in racial and ethnic diversity. Other members agreed and committed to expanding the diversity of the board to ensure we are represented by the personal demographics of field with which we work.

Finance Committee: Kerri Cloud, CFO, Larry Pintacuda, Allison Davis, and Chris Card:

- **Financial Statements:**

The financial statements for 2020-21 were distributed prior to the board meeting and were also displayed on Zoom. The Forum maintains the same funding sources with a few additional contracts in this fiscal year; however, the Pinellas INCENTIVE\$ contract has been discontinued. Kerri opened up the floor for questions.

Larry shared that since all state agencies and departments were asked to carry out an 8% budget cut exercise, there is a concern it may impact our future funding. Phyllis said we don’t know if or how this might affect the Forum, but we would stay actively involved and continue with our broad advocacy efforts for the programs we administer. Bob said there was a 3.4 Billion and the state is looking for federal relief to fill that gap. Kerri shared the budget goals for the Forum (see financial statements) and Phyllis said that any unrestricted funding we can receive through grants and contracts supports our advocacy efforts. Larry commended Forum leadership for maintaining low administrative costs while still producing high quality outcomes.

Bob asked if some of our budget goals should shift to address the COVID-19 crisis and suggested perhaps adding an “emergency” goal. In particular, he wondered about the Help Me Grow program and the role it plays throughout the state. Phyllis shared that HMG is funded through general state revenue and as such, is vulnerable whenever there are budget cuts predicted. There has been a request made to shift the funding for HMG to the CCDBG or CARES budget. Phyllis has sent the HMG Impact report to Shan Goff (OEL ED) and Eric Hall (FDOE Senior Chancellor). This was completed before the LBRs were due, but the Impact report framed HMG as a COVID-19 response related program. Bob reflected on his initial statement and suggested that since our goals are strictly internal, it probably was not necessary to make any changes.

Kerri shared the July financials and indicated that there was only one month to discuss. She said that the PPE loan (funded April 2020) that the Forum received has not been utilized at this point; the fiscal department is waiting to see what can be forgiven. Allison asked why the Accounts Receivables were at 4.5%. Kerri responded that it was due to the T.E.A.C.H. spend down that happens each fiscal year. Kerri added that the audit needs to be completed and they are hoping for an audit report by the December Board meeting.

Bob asked for a motion to accept the proposed budget (Moved: W. Blechman/Second: L. Stoller).

Bob asked for a motion to accept the financials (Moved: L. Pintacuda /Second: W. Blechman).

CEO Travel Expense Report:

- Finance committee approved.
- Board approved (Moved: L. Pintacuda/Second: L. Stoller)

President's Report:

Phyllis shared the video tour of the new building to board members because COVID-19 has prevented any face-to-face meetings in 2020. Phyllis indicated that we have no information about the impact of potential budget cuts on Forum programs. The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) has joined the Forum and Larry Pintacuda will serve as a liaison to the Board. Bob asked if afterschool programs were within the same general market as early childhood programs, and if so, would we embrace the intersect and do conjoint outreach. He added, "They are the same kids, just older!" Gege added that many early childhood programs are now offering school age e-learning. Larry said that Phyllis will bring important leadership to the FAN. He also suggested that the advisory board for FAN may in fact be too expansive.

Bob supports advocating for OEL to be fully integrated into the Department of Education, and Wil concurred adding that education begins at infancy. Bob said he sees the disconnect between FDOE and the early learning field as a structural flaw. Phyllis added that she is seeing positive change with Mark Wilson at the Chamber and now we need to see the same emphasis on "birth to career" from the Commissioner of Education. Phyllis also spent some time discussing the positive aspects of the Florida Prosperity Project with Michael Williams.

Children's Week: Phyllis talked about strategies to plan events for a hybrid Children's Week agenda (virtual and limited F2F). She explained that all of the money that supports CW is derived from sponsorship and donations. For example, the CW planning committee is looking for some high-profile contributors who might want to provide a narrated video that can be broadcast. The Freddy Figgers Foundation is a possibility. Mr. Figgers has a very inspirational story of resilience and success and was raised in Gadsden County, Florida. Phyllis will continue to stay on his radar and try to engage him in CW activities. Linda asked if we had liability insurance for CW activities

The discussion moved to COVID-19 at the Forum. There have been 5 confirmed cases. All necessary precautions are being taken within the building to prevent spread, and so far, there has been no contamination across Forum employees.

Phyllis gave a summary of the Summer Webinar Series the Forum facilitated for the early learning workforce and also shared that the Forum was awarded the Family Friendly Employer award for Leon County. Bob complimented the award and wondered if the Forum could play a role in mentoring other companies to adopt family friendly policies as well. Phyllis agreed and said that just because you are a non-profit does not mean you are family-friendly. It takes careful consideration and implementation of specific policies.

A discussion about Gold Seal followed. Wil wondered if Gold Seal Organizations were of high quality. Gege followed up with several questions about how the accreditation is conducted and what are the qualifications of the person observing. She said that NAEYC accreditation is the pinnacle, but she knows not all other accrediting organizations have the same requirements and standards. There are local property tax implications for programs that are Gold Seal so it has a financial impact. Representative Grall is likely to resubmit a bill next session that moves Gold Seal from DCF to OEL. Phyllis shared that this was the topic of her dissertation and that if she could get funding, she would like to repeat the same study she did but using CLASS scores and accrediting agencies. Wil closed this discussion by saying that we need to advocate for the bill if it is submitted.

Bob asked how FAN fit into our Strategic Plan. Phyllis said that it does fit within our current Goals and Objectives but the board will need to take this up during the next meeting. It is a complex relationship between mentoring, fiscal management, and administration. Linda asked if we could have a presentation from Brian Hickey about FAN at the next meeting. Phyllis said she would put this in place.

Phyllis shared the new breast feeding accommodation policy that needed to be approved. There was discussion and it was agreed that a timeline for how long someone could continue breastfeeding in the workplace was removed. With that change, there was a motion to accept by G. Kreischer and a Second by L. Pintacuda.

New business was all covered in previous sections.

Next meeting: December 11, 2020 via Zoom 10:00 am-12:00 am

Closed Executive Session

The board discussed and approved Dr. Kalifeh's annual evaluation.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Pintacuda
Secretary



Signature of Secretary

Denise Bishop
Recording

<<will be reviewed and approved at Dec. meeting>>

Minutes Approved (date)



Signature of President

<<will be reviewed and approved at Dec. meeting>>

Minutes Approved (date)