



**Board of Directors Meeting
September 24, 2021
10:00am -12:00 pm**

This meeting was held via teleconference in an abundance of caution due to COVID-19 concerns

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members present: Bob Buesing, Chris Card, Allison Davis, Claudia Davant, Gege Kreischer, Diana Ragbeer-Murray, Larry Pintacuda

Staff Present: Phyllis Kalifeh, Kerri Cloud, Denise Bishop

Welcome:

Chair Bob Buesing welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 10:08 am.

Approval of Minutes:

The Board approved the minutes from the June 18, 2021 Meeting. (M: L. Pintacuda/ S: G. Kreischer. All approved).

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

Larry started out the Board's mission minute by saying that Phyllis is an outstanding CEO. He talked about the impressive statewide impact she has on policy and practice, and the rest of the board heartily agreed. Gege shared that the Business Leadership Institute, with Robyn Perlman, collaborated with NIEER and the Forum to provide a 4-part series focused on preparing people to advocate within the ECE field "*Educator to Influencer*". She shared that she is seeing some advocacy work taking place in Hillsborough County including a Town Hall meeting at the Children's Board in November.

Chair's Report: Bob Buesing:

Bob started this section of the meeting by remembering Dr. Wil Blechman. He asked that we take a moment to acknowledge his impact and to honor him as a friend and a board member. Phyllis shared that she sent "The World Needs more Purple People" books with the tribute to Wil to Board members and that a plaque commemorating Dr. Wil is being hung by entrance to the conference room dedicated to him at the Children's Forum. The Forum is also helping Rachel Blechman organize and deliver a virtual Celebration of Life event. It will be broadcast October

14, 2021 from 7:00-8:30 pm. As part of the Celebration, Rachel will be showing the video from the *Nancy D. Thomas Advocacy Award* which Will received in 2008. Phyllis played it for the Board. Diana shared some of her memories of Wil and emphasized the impact his work and passion for early childhood development had on the Miami area. He is being honored with an award in his name, the “Wil Blechman Outstanding Early Childhood Educator” award, which will be presented at the Under the Stars with Stars gala event on October 20, 2021.

Bob closed this commemorative portion of the meeting by stressing that Wil always presented with a sense of urgency on issues of early care and education and he would want us to continue on in that same manner.

Other items from the Chair’s report include an update on the Ready Nation work, which Bob is engaged in and is working to keep a focus on Florida. Op-eds focused on early care and education are being written by various contributors; Chad Laure from PNC Bank Florida has committed to writing an Op-ed and Bob will fill in as a back-up representative to Chad. Bob is encouraged by language he is hearing in Florida from agencies such as FDOE that references Birth to Career, rather than just K-Career. Phyllis added that these efforts match what is being shared by the new Chancellor of Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL)

Nominating Committee: Larry and Diana convened as representatives of the Nominating Committee. They are searching for some strong candidates to fill the vacant positions on the Board. One name that has risen to the top is Shawna Pointville. Phyllis will circulate her resume and supporting documents for the Board to review. Ted Granger has indicated that he would like to return to his position on the Board once his replacement is hired for the Leon CSC.

Finance Committee: The finance committee met prior to the Board meeting to discuss the current financial statements.

- **Financial Statements:**

All pertinent documents are included in the Board packet. The audit deadline is December 31, 2021. Bob asked for an update of the PPP funding related to COVID-19. Kerri shared that \$95k was returned to DEL, \$229,661 in expenses was forgiven, and \$510,339 was paid back to Synovus/PPP loan in August 2021. Call for a motion to accept the financial statements. (M: Chris Card / S: L. Pintacuda. All approved)

The proposed budget for next fiscal year has been reviewed by the Finance committee and is also included in the materials packet for this meeting. Last year the budget was \$15.6M and this year the proposed budget is \$15.5M.

Bob asked if we would have access to any of the over \$2B in financial support coming into Florida to address the impact of COVID-19 on the ECE field. Phyllis said that she is working on promoting INCENTIVES\$ as a statewide program with the Forum serving as the administrator. Some of those resources have been distributed in the form of a \$1000 bonus for early educators throughout Florida (similar in nature, but not amount, to the bonuses for K-12 teachers). There was discussion about whether there is inherent and sustainable value of such bonuses as they relate to retention of qualified educators in the field. Claudia felt as though statewide

INCENTIVES\$ has a chance of being included in the funding this year. Phyllis stressed that wage increase programs are only effective if the fiscal and benefits cliff is taken into account for the ECE workforce. This is a very big issue in the field given that 50-60% of the workforce qualifies for state and federal subsidies. Phyllis also shared that she spoke to Matt Mears about designating early educators as essential workers (state definition).

There was a call for a motion to accept the proposed budget. (M: L. Pintacuda / S: G. Kreischer. All approved)

- **CEO Travel and Expense report**

Consistent with NonProfits First, the Children's Forum provides all necessary documentation to accompany the CEO travel and expense report. Phyllis explained that expenditures for Crucial Conversations training are associated with organization-wide professional development and is part of the strategic plan. The CEO Travel and Expense report was reviewed and approved (M: L. Pintacuda / S: C. Davant. All approved)

- **President's Report: Phyllis Kalifeh**

Phyllis discussed the Celebration of Life event that the Forum is coordinating with Rachel Blechman. She shared that Wil is respected and revered in the ECE field and is going to be severely missed. She included an article published in the Miami Times that highlights the impact Wil had on those of us who work in the field of early care and education. It was a wonderful tribute to his life and his amazing contributions on behalf of children and their well-being. Phyllis introduced in name the new Chancellor of the Division of Early Learning (Matt Mears) and shared that she had an opportunity to meet with the Chancellor and share the Forum's mission and specific programs. He is an attorney who has worked with the Florida Department of Education for over 6 years. He appears to be open and very interested in learning about the early education field.

Phyllis also discussed the Early Learning Consortium Recommendations for the Federal funding. They also met with Matt Mears to discuss recommendations for the ARPA funding coming to Florida. (Document included in materials packet). While no specific commitments were made, he was receptive to the recommendations and expressed interest in considering the stakeholder perspectives with regard to the funding. Larry said that the Consortium summary should serve as a helpful tool for the new Chancellor. Gege asked why FACCM's role has decreased with regard to the Consortium. Phyllis said that they seem to have gone in their own direction and that they disagree with how the money coming into Florida should be spent. They actively chose not to include their names on the EL Consortium document. Bob asked how board members could help with advocating for some of the Consortium recommendations. Phyllis said one concern that has to be addressed is that increases in reimbursement rates and eligibility only apply to school readiness and as such, some providers will be excluded. There is a concern about outpricing the market for those who do not qualify for SR.

As mentioned earlier during the meeting, the Children's Forum is requesting funding for the INCENTIVES\$ program to be available statewide (currently only available in Hillsborough, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties). The estimate for doing so is \$22.4M. This really isn't

unreasonable considering the federal funding coming into Florida. We have shared this request with Matt Mears and the Consortium is supportive. Since legislative committees are beginning to meet, Claudia and Phyllis will be networking and advocating for the request. Phyllis also shared that the Forum is making a request for additional funding to facilitate expanding Help Me Grow statewide.

Bob emphasized that the funding for ECE in Florida has significantly increased and he asked how we can get in front of some of the funding decisions. Phyllis said that we need to get the attention of key legislators and encouraged all board members to reach out to their representatives throughout the state. Larry said that he was concerned because the Governor's office and the current administration in general seems to have no sense of urgency. It is rumored that Manny Diaz follow Richard Corcoran as the next Commissioner of Education. Diana shared that she knows Manny Diaz, but that he isn't always accessible.

Phyllis finished her President's report by sharing a proposed COVID Dependent Child Quarantine Policy. This was drafted in response to the closures of the schools and the impact that has had on non-exempt staff. This proposed policy is necessary to provide equity in the administration of benefits allowable to both exempt and non-exempt staff. She requested board approval (see enclosed). (M: G. Kreischer / S: L. Pintacuda. All approved)

- **Children's Forum Strategic Plan Review**

Phyllis shared that the Gold Seal Quality Care program has moved to the Division of Early Learning under the Department of Education. The transition is referred to as a type 2 transfer. Phyllis has a meeting next week to discuss the details of the transfer and how it will impact the contract we have with DCF. Phyllis said she would like to consult with Gege, in part because of her role with NAEYC accreditation. Gege said there have been problems with maintenance of Gold Seal due to visitation/access to programs during COVID-19. Phyllis shared that DCF has provided some extensions to programs to give them time to be in compliance.

Phyllis also shared with the board that the Forum has decided to not pursue IACET renewal. It is a very expensive process, and as an organization, we are not doing enough internal and external training to justify the cost. The renewal process is almost as much work as an initial application, so if training becomes a key component of our work, we can reapply. Phyllis also shared that the Forum was awarded the contract (\$225,000) to complete the statewide workforce study. The last study was completed by the Forum in 2013.

New Business:

Bob raised issues about the building that the Forum is leasing in Tallahassee. It is officially in foreclosure and he discussed the parameters of the lease stating the owner's financial security is in jeopardy. We are permitted to write checks for any repairs that need to be made to ensure services continue. We then can deduct the amount from the lease amount. Bob also shared that the Forum has been dropped from the lawsuit and our rent is being paid directly to a trust account. Bob said that he has asked for a budget from the landlord. When drafting the agreement initially, Bob was very careful to include specific clauses that protect the Forum in situations

such as these. Chris thanked Bob for all of his legal support at that time as well as now as we navigate these issues.

Next meeting: December 17, 2022

* Subsequent to this meeting, documentation and materials will be disseminated for review of Shawna Pointville as a nomination to the board. The board will decide via electronic vote if there is consensus to invite her to the board, and this will be reported at the next board meeting.

Closed Executive Session:

- Compensation committee: Linda Hood, Chris Card, and Bob Buesing met and recommended a 3% raise for Phyllis Kalifeh beginning this contract year M: G. Kreischer / S: D. Ragbeer-Murray. All approved

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Pintacuda
Secretary

Denise Bishop
Recording

Minutes Approved on: _____ <<to be submitted for approval at the Dec meeting>>
[Date]

Signature of Secretary: _____ [Date]

Signature of Chair: _____ [Date]