

Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“The committee will receive testimony on the status of early childhood education, the School Breakfast Program and the At-Risk Meals Program”

LOCATION: Committee Room 11
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: February 27, 2013
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Connie Wagner, Co-Chair
Senator Linda R. Greenstein
Senator Samuel D. Thompson
Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly



ALSO PRESENT:

Melanie M. Schulz
Executive Director

Sharon Benesta
Chief of Staff

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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ASSEMBLYWOMAN CONNIE WAGNER (Co-Chair):

Good morning, everybody.

Sorry that we were late this morning. Traffic on the Parkway was exciting -- a little bit of a delay. But I appreciate everybody coming here. I know it was tough travelling weather.

So we're going to start the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. And Senator Thompson, I'd like you to lead us in that.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you.

(all recite pledge)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just have a few announcements before we begin.

First of all, the Secretary of Agriculture, Douglas Fischer, will be addressing us today. So when he comes in we will just accommodate him as to his schedule.

And I would also like to announce that there will be a Subcommittee on School Facilities and Construction meeting on March 5; that's at 11:00 a.m. in Committee Room 16. And on March 19 we will have the last in our series of virtual blended and online learning, and that's starting at 1:00 p.m. in Committee Room 16.

So with that said, we all know that early childhood programs have certainly been in the news. We have our President who is challenging us to promote universal childhood programs -- universal pre-kindergarten programs. We know how important it is to educate the youngest members of our society.

So today what I hope to learn is what is the status of our children's programs here in New Jersey: Are we meeting the needs, what do

we need to do to meet those needs; what about the staff, how is it operating, what can we do to improve our staff? There is always room for improvement. What do we need to do here, as Legislators?

And with that, we also need to talk about school breakfast and the nutrition of our young people -- to make sure that they are properly fed so that they can continue to learn. This is something that we all believe that we owe our children here.

So we're hoping that, with your help, we can help you to make our children's lives brighter and successful from the onset of education so that they have a chance in life to go on and do bigger and better things. That's what we owe them.

So once again, I thank you for coming here today.

So with that we're going to start with Cynthia Rice, Senior Policy Analyst, ACNJ; Cecilia Zalkind, Executive Director, ACNJ. So if you'd like to come up to the desk.

Just please introduce yourselves.

C E C I L I A Z A L K I N D: Good morning, Assemblywoman Wagner and members of the Joint Committee. I'm Cecilia Zalkind, the Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New Jersey, which is a statewide child advocacy organization located in Newark which has, for many years, had a strong commitment to ensuring that our youngest children start school ready and able to learn.

I'm really just going to introduce Cynthia Rice, who is our Senior Policy Analyst, who will do the presentation today.

As you mentioned, preschool has become a national dialogue; it's very exciting. But we need to remember that New Jersey has been

providing high-quality preschool to thousands of children for many years. We are a success and, hopefully, whatever happens on a national level will support that to move forward. Our interest is in making sure it reaches more children who can benefit, and we appreciate the opportunity today to share with you information about some work that we've done looking at where preschool has expanded. You'll hear, in a few minutes, representatives from the Woodbine and Freehold school districts about their efforts to expand preschool; and also information about those districts that were promised preschool funding under the School Funding Reform Act -- a promise that has not been kept.

So let me turn it over to Cynthia Rice, who is ACNJ Senior Policy Analyst.

CYNTHIA C. RICE, ESQ.: Thank you, Ceil.

Good morning, everyone. Melanie only gave me 10 minutes to talk (laughter), so in such a short period of time it's really impossible to capture the volumes of research and data that show us that high quality preschool can have a dramatic effect on not only the children who participate in the program, but on society as a whole.

You know, as a nation, from the first day of kindergarten we are focused on children's achievement. When children are prepared on that first day, they realize early successes and those successes lead to more successes. But when they're not prepared, even from that first day, we are setting them up for a life-long struggle.

I would guess that most of us didn't go to preschool -- any of us who are over 40 certainly, probably, didn't -- I didn't. But I can tell you that it is a different world today. We know so much more about brain

development and what children need to know on that first day of kindergarten to be not only successful then, but later on in life. So when young children attend programs outside the home, we know that quality and duration matter. When a child attends an early learning program that is of both high quality and full-day, the lasting effects on his or her development can be significant.

And while all children can benefit, we know that children from low-income families can benefit the most. We also know that preschool is one way of closing our persistent achievement gap and bringing equity to our public schools.

I submit to you that no new education reform will ever be meaningful if children haven't acquired those skills to be successful that they need on that first day of school.

So as Ceil said, this is a very timely conversation. Over the past week preschool has gotten quite a bit of national attention. But in New Jersey we've known this for a long time. We didn't have to wait for the President to talk about it in his State of the Union Address. For nearly 20 years, our State has provided varying levels of support to provide preschool throughout the state -- particularly in districts with high concentrations of poverty. And in 2008 the school funding formula required that all 3- and 4-year-olds who are in low-income families receive high-quality, full-day preschool.

The problem is, is that since 2008 very little has happened. While New Jersey has really led the nation in providing high-quality preschool to low-income children, thousands of children are still denied this early education -- really just because of where they live. Five years after the

Funding Reform law was passed and became law, only four districts have actually expanded and provide the level of preschool that was promised in that decision. As a matter of fact, in September, all children -- 3- and 4-year-olds -- should have, would have been required to have that, had the funding formula been funded. So thousands of children have missed that opportunity, even though those five years, which was in the formula, was identified that all children should have been participating by next September.

So ACNJ wants to know: So what's going on with these programs? We have about 100 districts that receive State aid -- preschool aid -- to provide half-day programs for some of their 4-year-olds. And then we have the four districts that receive full funding to expand their programs, like the 31 districts that have been provided preschool since 1999.

So what's been going on? So ACNJ did two things: The first thing is that we surveyed those 100 districts that provide -- that have State aid to provide for a half-day preschool. And all of those districts do have high concentrations of poverty, and all of their children would benefit from such a preschool program. We have heard from about 46 administrators who have completed the survey. There were four key findings: One, was that these districts are ready and willing to expand their preschools so that more children can benefit from preschool. Eighty-two percent surveyed said that they had a strong interest in expanding. And they said the reason why-- Nearly every response said the reason was, was to make sure that the children were ready for kindergarten -- that they needed those skills to be ready for kindergarten. And, in fact, 75 percent said that they wanted the

program so that the children's social and emotional issues -- that social and emotional issues would be addressed early on.

You know, it's much more-- Early childhood is much more than academics. It always looks-- A quality program looks at the whole child. And so looking at what they need to be successful not only is that they know their numbers and their letters, but do they know how to work with other children? Do they know how to behave appropriately, and what is expected of them? It's known early. This is part of a quality program.

Eighty-five percent of the responses said that there is a very high demand by the parents for this program. In fact, 41 percent that responded to the survey said they had waiting lists for their 4-year-olds -- so many parents wanted to put their children in the program.

The third point was that what's missing is the State support that was promised in the funding formula. The result is that the survey found that most districts really cannot meet the needs of their young children without adequate State funding. About half are unable to serve all of their 4-year-olds; more than 68 percent continue to provide only a half-day program for their 4-year-olds. And only about a third has anything for their 3-year-olds. Again, these are for low-income children.

And the fourth point was that districts remain committed to this; 70 percent are trying to use local funds to supplement what the State is paying for. But with rising costs, and the cap, local funds cannot go far enough to provide this positive effect on children.

So that was the survey. The next thing we did was-- So five years into implementation, how are these four expansion districts doing? What's going on? Are they seeing successes? They are currently

implementing full-day, high quality programs for 3- and 4-year olds. We interviewed administrators from Fairfield Township in Cumberland County, Little Egg Harbor in Ocean County, Red Bank in Monmouth County, and Woodbine in Cumberland County. All four received funding. Now, all four districts are different -- they are very different. But they all pretty much said the same thing: The preschool program was having dramatic effects on their children who were participating. All four districts said most of their students, before the preschool program, were entering their kindergarten without the necessary skills to be successful -- particularly in the areas of reading and language. They all said that starting earlier, at 3 years old, was making a measureable difference in the link between preschool and being successful in kindergarten because they are better prepared. And Lynda Anderson-Towns from Woodbine is going to talk about her experience after I'm done.

They also saw the link between preschool and fewer children requiring special education. So for example, in Little Egg Harbor before preschool was implemented, their kindergarten referral rate was about 11 percent; last year, four years into implementation of preschool, their referral rate was less than 3 percent -- clearly showing that having children better prepared is making a difference in their special ed numbers.

And one of the conversations that I had with the administrators from Little Egg was that they said beforehand there was no place else to send a child who may be having some issues. Because at kindergarten they had to get moving, so they were automatically referred to the child study team. In the preschool program there are intervention services that were making a difference, helping the child, addressing the issues earlier on.

And, in the long run, that was not only helping the child -- which is the most important thing -- it was saving money.

Similarly, Red Bank said the same thing. Their superintendent, Laura Morana, said, "When we look at our special education numbers, we know we're identifying the right children, and they're getting the services they need."

They also talked about how the social and emotional skills are better developed. And the result of this is because children had the skills to deal with other children, learning how to respond to classrooms. What they saw was that behavioral issues in kindergarten were not a problem. It was amazing because they all talked about that, even when there are problems -- for example, in Fairfield, Nicole Bethea, the Assistant Principal said, "They are so less of an issue right now because children-- Their social and emotional issues were addressed earlier and their behavioral problems are far less." This was a big problem in kindergarten in all four districts and it seems to be very, very effective.

Also, the support has increased opportunities for teachers. You know, teaching can be a very insular career. And yet, preschool has allowed the teachers of early learning -- and that's preschool through the 3rd grade -- to begin to think differently; to move away from silos of learning. But how are we working as a team? All four talked about that -- that the collaboration was much better thanks to the preschool support.

So besides all the national research, this information really documents the benefits, the demand, and the need for New Jersey to keep its promise to young children. And so today we urge you to think about making a down payment to expand access to preschool for low-income

children. Fortunately, there is already a base to build upon. By supplementing what's existing right now -- the existing support -- more children can reap the benefits enjoyed by the 3- and 4-year-olds who have been currently attending high-quality, full-day preschool in many of our districts.

So, for example, by providing \$10 million in additional preschool aid, the State can maximize its existing commitment to preschool in several ways. First, if you expand existing programs from half-day to full-day you could cover almost 1,500 more children to provide them with high-quality preschool; or about 800 children who don't get any preschool right now; or districts can make a combination of both.

You know, in New Jersey we have long recognized the importance of preschool, especially for children from low-income families. We understand that money is tight. But we will pay in other ways, whether if it's for additional costs in special education down the road, juvenile delinquency -- we pay for it. Isn't it better to put the money upfront to benefit kids? And by providing your own children with a strong educational foundation we're ensuring that we'll have, for example, more proficient readers in 3rd grade. You know, the Governor said yesterday in his budget address that we're doing well, but not every area is doing well. Right now, there is 37 percent of our 3rd graders -- last year's 3rd graders -- who aren't reading on grade level. For many of the districts that would benefit from preschool, that number is much, much higher.

Making this investment pays enormous dividends for children and families, communities and taxpayers. As budget discussions get underway, we urge you to view this as a down payment -- as a critical

investment in our children's education. This is one area that we can no longer afford to delay.

You know, I just want to end with what the Governor said yesterday. He quoted Norman Schwarzkopf. "The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it." This is certainly the right thing to do. We urge you to take this on, even though it's pretty hard.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Well, Cynthia, that was excellent testimony. And I have to tell you that every now and then I go out there and read all of these articles in support of preschool education. And then I make that fatal error of reading the comments after it. And when I read them I get so disturbed because reading comments such as, "Well, why do you have to do this? You know, they all catch up sometime or another, so why are we pushing so young?" And it disturbs me. But I think you hit it right on the nail when you said that we can make a difference in our special education numbers because you identify how they learn and you can change it at that point; whereas if we go too far, we can't change it.

So you know, when I read those comments I'm going to remember that part of your testimony today. And I can assure you that if I had the power of the budget you would get your money. (laughter)

MS. RICE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: You don't have to convince me. But your testimony was excellent and I appreciate you coming.

Does anybody have questions?

Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: As I was sitting here listening to you talk about the need for pre-K and so on, some thoughts were going through my mind. Why do we need pre-K?

MS. RICE: Well, you know, what I talked about before -- you know, it's a different world. And what we expect of our children--

SENATOR THOMPSON: Well, I'll give you my answer.

MS. RICE: Sorry?

SENATOR THOMPSON: I'll give you my answer.

MS. RICE: Okay, sure.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I think we need it because what needs to be done in the home is not being done. That is, the parents are not really preparing their kids for school. And what is the best way of attacking this problem? I mean, for those who didn't -- yes, we need pre-K. But if parents were doing a better job at home, there would be fewer kids who need it because they would be ready when they got to school. And why aren't parents doing it? I think a lot of parents don't know how. They don't know how to get their kids ready for school -- to give them the basic information they should learn at home before they get there. So why don't we deal with this problem?

I think maybe we should look at the possibility of introducing a different kind of parenting class in high school so that when kids are young -- before they have kids -- they learn what they should do as parents and how they should raise their kids. Not just literature and health and those issues, but how they can prepare the kids for the future, for school, and so on, etc. I think if we taught high schoolers, before they have children, how

to do this, it might help things out a lot in the home before the kids ever get to that stage. Now, I mean, we can deal with them in pre-K and so on, too, but I think we ought to take a look at that kind of approach.

MS. ZALKIND: May I comment?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Yes.

MS. ZALKIND: ACNJ has most recently looked at very young children, from infancy to age 3. We produced our recent Newark Kids Count report, which we released two weeks ago, that looks specifically at data around very young children. And there's so much information about the critical nature of brain development from prenatally and through the first year. So that idea of engaging, educating, helping parents to be their child's first and best teacher is certainly something that needs to be on a broader, early care and education agenda.

I think for preschool, we know so much more now about how children's brains develop, and the opportunity from that type of environment and opportunity for kids from 3 up. But your point about parents being a part of this is absolutely part of creating that strong system.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I think we need to put more emphasis on that -- getting parents more involved in getting the kids prepared and educated and so on. The simple little things, if you spend a little time every day with the children doing this or that-- You know, we tell them how to feed them and so on, but in terms of telling them how to prepare them to be educated, we don't tell them that. And for kids in their late teens, early 20s, well, they're accustomed to playing with dolls and so on, but they don't know the rest of the facts here. Maybe we should prepare some courses to help them with that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Senator Rice -- yes.

SENATOR RONALD L. RICE (Co-Chair): Yes, let me concur with my good colleague, Senator Thompson.

Both things are needed. You can't really do one without the other. The reason we need preschool is because studies have shown that they work, but part of the studies showing that they work -- the longitudinal studies showed that, particularly in the urban communities, kids entering preschool are 16 months behind. And I can never figure out -- kindergarten (indiscernible) -- I can never figure out how can you be 16 months behind in kindergarten when kindergarten is the first stage of school. That's where you're supposed to learn. And what they were talking about -- and that's why Head Start came about -- they were talking about cognitive skills -- the kids should be able to relate to certain kinds of things. And so it becomes important.

But over the years, as you say, the younger people having babies -- trying to get an education in some cases, in other cases just lost because the family divorced themselves from them -- don't really understand the need to have those associations -- the cognitive skills type things, important things, pointing things out, and repetition in the home.

And so we do need it. Not only do we need it there at the early age, we also need it at the age of those who are presently going through other grades. Primarily because when you get a parent who is a 6th or 7th or 8th grade, 9th grade parent, what compounds the problem in the education system, and kids going to college -- and we keep talking about remediate (indiscernible) -- the kid can do more math than the mother. So when they get to the more difficult math or comprehensive reading, there is

no support system there. And so the only place you can really direct these youngsters is through support systems -- that's our school programs -- that we keep cutting, and some of us are trying to put back.

And so there needs to be a program -- an adult education piece where we encourage parents to go -- even if they don't want to -- to get their diploma or degree, at least to kind of learn the basics. And I really believe, and I've always said that, if we can find a way to get some parents into the classroom setting after school with their youngster, getting maybe some mentoring or tutorial-- If a parent is at the 5th grade and the kid's at the 5th grade, I think they have a lot of fun in the same class. I think the kid will go home and tell the parent, "That's not what the teacher said, Mom. She said so-and-so," and they can play games with it. (laughter) And so there's a need.

But because I do agree with Senator Thompson on this issue, through you, Madam Chair, I'm going to ask the staff -- if Senator Thompson doesn't mind -- to work with Senator Thompson, and to work with my good sister -- how are you doing, sister Cynthia? -- and with my long-time friend, Ceil. A lot of years, Ceil, right? -- what, 35 now, we've been together, okay? (laughter) And craft something that's reasonably comprehensive to start this process of getting the in-school, parental type of education, some place there, without making the burden on teachers -- with all the other things they have to do.

And also we should try to encourage all of our daycare providers and preschool providers, by way of the legislation, to do the same thing. Because what happens, Senator, is that we have parents who recognize the importance of preschool and they're dropping the kids off,

but they still haven't gotten the parent piece, you know? So the thing is that if we're going to be funding preschools and all of these pieces, we can at least insist that a part of that time is spent -- because once a month, get the parents in, (indiscernible) playing or whatever. But you all can figure it out legislatively. And I'll be willing to sponsor that, and if the Assemblywoman would join as a co-prime and, maybe--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Absolutely.

SENATOR RICE: --the Chair would join, on the Senate side. And then we'll see what our colleagues think about objectivity, reasonableness, and what's right for young people, okay?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you.

Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Chairwoman.

First, I could definitely relate to what Senator Thompson was saying in reference to parenting. I think one of the major issues that we've had, Senator -- I know in my district, at least -- is that many of the classes in the curriculum -- things that were targeted towards home economics and stuff like that -- have been cut for years out of the school districts. And I always thought that was very important, in particular at the grammar school age. Because I can remember as a grammar school student you would do half a year in the shop and half a year in home economics. And I think I learned how to boil spaghetti, you know, maybe in the 5th or 6th grade -- and that's a lost art with microwaves and things of that nature. (laughter)

But the whole area of that -- if that part could come back into the school districts -- it's the realistic things, it's the on-hand training. Even at some point, I believe we had parenting classes that worked with the

children to even become certified babysitters; so they would do CPR, first aid -- you know -- the basics of babysitting. So I think that's important.

But the early part -- the cognitive skills and things like that -- you can't really bypass it without the delayed developments and things of that nature. But even more important is the nutritional aspect. I think a lot of people take for granted that if the toddlers at home are, you know -- at 3- and 4-years-old that they are eating a proper meal; or a breakfast, lunch, and a dinner. I know that's not realistic in the area where I live. The reality is that the diets are very bad. Statistics-- We could talk on and on about obesity, and diabetes, and now cholesterol issues -- you name it -- that our children eat poor diets, in particular in inner cities because we no longer have supermarkets. So now they're getting it from corner stores where the sodium in the sliced ham and the turkey is so high their blood pressure has probably skyrocketed; and the sugar intake. So the impact not only just for the educational aspect but for the nutritional aspect is beyond important to start our children as early as possible.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you very, very much.

I would just like to say that I have a granddaughter; she's 5 years old. This is how I know preschool works -- because I took care of her for the first three years. I'd like to think that I'm an educated person. I read to her, we did coloring, we did everything that we were supposed to do. Then she went into pre-kindergarten at 3 years of age -- pre-childhood. I have to tell you that I didn't want to like it because I thought I did a great job, okay? But when I saw what she learned and what she could do now, I am amazed at where they have taken her. So I see it working. And now, at

5, I basically have a little adult here, and we carry on some great conversations. And I see what she can do. She wouldn't have done that if it was just me. So I do believe it takes two to tango, it takes two to work together. And I now see the importance of it. And I was of the generation where there was no preschool, and where we had nothing. We had to do it all in kindergarten. And there is a difference.

So I thank you for advocating. You did a great job today. And we'll see where we can find some money, okay?

Thank you.

This is where we're going to--

Are we done?

We're going to just interrupt a little right now because we do have our Secretary of Agriculture, Douglas Fisher, who is here. He's going to give us some of the information on where we stand in schools and with our at-risk population, our school breakfast program.

I'm glad to have you here.

S E C R E T A R Y D O U G L A S H. F I S H E R: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

It's great to be here, as always. I have a lot of fond memories, certainly, of this chamber.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: You were here before, right?
(laughter)

SECRETARY FISHER: Yes, I was here before. Absolutely.

And I actually-- When I heard you were having this Joint Committee today, I just wanted to come over -- I asked if I could come over

and just spend a couple of minutes. And so I appreciate you giving me the time. It will be short and sweet.

By the way, Assemblyman Wimberly, I remember that shop. I didn't do so well. (laughter) I think they had me make some kind of a little carry kit that you put tools in. It never held anything.

I wanted to come over today just to talk for a couple of minutes about school breakfast and what's happening now. As you know, school breakfast-- And I'm here with Rose Tricario. She's head of Food and Nutrition for the State.

Twenty percent or more students are eligible for free and reduced meals. If they are, the schools must have a school breakfast program in place. And so one of the things we want to talk about for just a second is how you get those meals to the children -- how you get them to the kids. Many of them have a delivery system that could clearly be made more effective by offering other choices than just having breakfast in the cafeteria. Many of the schools provide breakfast in the cafeteria. The participation rate is very low. It's offered, but children can't get to school. For a number of reasons they can't get there early. There are a whole host of reasons why there are not enough students who are able to take advantage of that. They have to get there before the bell. And there are things like inflexibility in school busing schedules, a number of things that create difficulty.

So as you all know -- and we talked about last year -- our participation rate has been very low. And we need to do something to give those schools -- those students a nutritious breakfast. Because there's working-- It's not just, in total, folks who are at the low end of the poverty

scale, it's even families with two working parents, guardians, grandparents. They just can't-- They're both off to work, and the schools -- the kids don't have breakfast.

So I know you've seen all the studies that show performance is improved when kids can eat. Without a meal they're not as attentive in the classroom. I don't think I have to demonstrate that to anyone here. The reports all tell you that. So we learned that there are barriers to having breakfast in the classroom. There are barriers to having breakfast in the classroom setting -- getting breakfast to the students.

School administrators--

That's one of the alternatives -- which is breakfast in the classroom -- breakfast before the bell. I know Cecilia has talked about it many times in her report.

School administrators thought that by serving breakfast in the classroom, they would take away from the instructional time that was being mandated. So that's where -- last year we talked about it. It went to Commissioner Cerf, who was very gracious when we talked about the barrier that had been put up for years -- saying it couldn't be part of the instructional time. And we signed a letter on January 17 that said that it would be considered instructional time. That was a big deal. We've been told by many districts that not being allowed to do this was detrimental to them getting the programming started.

So why am I here today? I'm here for two reasons -- that's what I said about short and sweet. First: I want to tell you what's happened since the letter. It was just a simple letter. It was years -- apparently they couldn't get that into the schools. First: to tell you what

happened. The fact report, as you will see and have seen-- Over 25,000 more kids will now be eating breakfast in the school this year since that letter. They will be able to have breakfast after the bell, and it will be -- and it is considered instructional time. So New Jersey is one of only 10 states in the nation to see double-digit increase of school breakfast participation. So according to FRAC, it's a 16.3 percent increase this year. So we're very pleased about that.

I don't really care about the statistics. That's not really what I'm -- as Secretary. What I'm concerned about is, if there are children coming to school hungry, that we have an opportunity to get them that -- that's what this is about. The fact that the rankings are moving is great. But when I hear about 30,000 new kids -- regardless of what the rank is -- or 25,000 children -- that's why we're really, really pleased we can say that.

Now, there are still, though, millions of dollars being left in Washington, regardless of sequester and all the other conversations that are going on. There are millions of dollars that schools could take advantage of -- of that money -- to get breakfast in the classroom. There are still barriers in many school districts, but they're local. It's nothing you have to do; it's nothing our Administration has to do. Our Administration will offer the support to every school district in the state to get it started. It's about the will and the understanding of what you need to do. So it's about the delivery system and the accessibility of the program.

As I said, I'm not really concerned about the rank, although I'm glad we moved up. I don't care what rank we are. What I care about is if there are students who are coming to school hungry, and we have the opportunity and the means to get them breakfast -- we can do that.

Every school district that does this does it a bit differently, and that's where our Department comes in, and we can help them with that. Some of the districts that are doing it extremely well -- Perth Amboy, Newark, Edison, Passaic, and Burlington. I've been in it. I encourage any one of you on the panel and anybody in the Legislature -- we'll take you there. We will show you how it works. Because if you don't see it, you can't-- There are questions that come up that, frankly, the answers are there. But you need to sense -- get that opportunity to see how it works. And I can tell you what all those negative questions will be. But I won't bore you with that today. But the best way I can demonstrate that to you is to offer you the opportunity to go see that. There is no one right model. It just takes creativeness and a willingness to do it.

Now, I'm going to show you--

This is my prop. (indicating) (laughter) The prop in the Assembly-- I remember sitting in those chairs when the budget -- somebody would come in and have their-- This is my prop for today.

It can be as simple as this. They can grab it and go. Milk comes into the classroom along with something like this, which is cereal, a fruit, and a juice. That doesn't seem to be too difficult once you see that in action. It takes minutes, seconds.

So why I'm here is just to tell you that there is money at the Federal level. Right now, for free, it's \$1.55 that every student has available to them if they're in the free and reduced program -- only for the free -- free is \$1.55. If it's subsidized at the reduced level I think it's \$0.30.

R O S E E. T R I C A R I O: At the reduced they would still get \$1.25 of Federal moneys.

SECRETARY FISHER: So that's it. That's all I came to tell you today -- just to inform you that there is-- You can encourage those in your districts. There are people who will put up artificial barriers and tell you why it can't work. But we can show you examples across the state where it does work.

That's it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Secretary Fisher, I thank you for your leadership on this. I truly, truly appreciate that 25,000 more children can learn in school without being hungry.

I just have a question for you. Suppose you're in a district that has a very small, tiny population of students who would qualify for free and reduced lunch, but I still want everybody to have that availability so that everybody feels equal. Is that possible?

SECRETARY FISHER: Why don't you answer that?

Rose is a food service director in Jackson. I'd rather have you hear it right from someone who's done it.

MS. TRICARIO: So every district is different not only in their operation, but also within their population, as you've identified. So in a district where there might be a small percentage of free and reduced children-- We've actually seen a model where there are forms for children to opt in or opt out. So if children have to pay for their breakfast, they can.

When they're in a district-- When we have a district where it's kind of flipped the other way -- where we have a smaller percentage of full-paying students -- where a majority of the enrolled children do qualify for free and reduced priced meals, typically the participation in the program and the funding in the program will enable the district to be able to provide

everyone a meal, a universal breakfast. So we've seen it done both ways. But again, keeping in mind that every district is different and they operate differently, both operationally and financially, it's what is going to work best for them to allow them to sustain the operation and serve the children.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just have one other question. That little package -- does that change every week, or is it the same for the whole year? I just want to know. (laughter)

MS. TRICARIO: That's a very good question.

SECRETARY FISHER: Do you mean, do you have to eat Frosted Flakes every day? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I want to know. I tend to do that.

MS. TRICARIO: Actually, there are many different vendors that provide a packet like the one the Secretary has brought today. So there are different varieties, there are different types of cereals that go in. And, again, knowing that there are different vendors-- So there is certainly a variety.

But one of the things I've seen is, to relieve some of the burden on the school food service staff, something like this might be done in concert with other menu items in the course of the week.

Speaking of the food service staff -- using the example we're discussing about having breakfast after the bell or breakfast in the classroom -- that also makes it more doable for the people who have to provide these breakfasts. If you've ever seen a school cafeteria at lunch time -- and a number of lunch periods -- with the children coming in and the volume-- If you had to do that twice a day, you're definitely not going to reach all the

children. So doing something in the classroom is expeditious, there's a lower staff requirement, and you're able to reach everyone at a time they can get there.

SECRETARY FISHER: We actually saw, in one district, where there were life lessons learned. They cleaned up, they wiped all the tables down themselves. If they didn't enroll they would do in-school homework while breakfast was being served. There were opportunities for the children to have a learning experience in just joining -- eating together in the classroom. It's actually-- There are some great examples of not just the-- A lot of the preconceived notions people have about what this is-- There are some life skills that are learned, as well as just getting nutrition so they can learn.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: One more question, I promise.

SECRETARY FISHER: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Is this for all grades, pre-K--

SECRETARY FISHER: K through 12.

MS. TRICARIO: K through 12. And depending upon the grade -- depending upon the students who are being served -- perhaps a high school level -- they might benefit more from a grab and go model where they're taking their breakfast and going to their classrooms -- so maybe even eating on the way. Whereas, with an elementary school model -- could be where the breakfast is actually delivered to the classroom.

SECRETARY FISHER: Governor Christie and I are very supportive of this. We're encouraging you, in your districts, to talk with folks in various districts around the state. There are some other things that

can be done. But I think the first step is to have a better understanding of what the program is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Once again, I want to thank you for everything you've done. I know in our district-- We went into one town, and it was simply asking them that they send home a letter in Spanish because the parents just didn't understand. And once we did that, the enrollment doubled for children experiencing having a free breakfast. And we went to go see it, and it was great to see. It's good when you go in and see things that are working.

But I thank you for your support. I know I'm going to go back to all my other towns and see what they're doing.

SECRETARY FISHER: Very good. Thanks again.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Any questions? (no response)

Thank you.

MS. TRICARIO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: So now we have Lynda Anderson, Superintendent of Woodbine School District; and Ronnie Dougherty, Principal of the Freehold Learning Center, Freehold School District.

Thank you very much for coming today.

If you need more chairs, please feel free to pull up some more chairs.

MS. ZALKIND: I just wanted to add, before the Commissioner (*sic*) leaves -- is that ACNJ, along with its partners, have been doing work for the New Jersey Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign. We've

come so far in the last few years, but we have a long way to go. And with one out of three children and families who really can't support basic needs, that need to make sure every child has breakfast is critical.

In the packets that you got from us is a report on school breakfast. And it's also a breakdown by districts. So we're urging you to look at your legislative districts and see if you have school districts with high concentrations of eligible children and low participation. Please reach out to them. We're doing that on our end. But coming from you is a whole different story. So please do that to make sure that more kids are eating breakfast.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: It's all yours.

CELINE KAELBLE: Good morning.

My name is Celine Kaelble, and I am currently the Early Childhood Supervisor at the Woodbine Elementary School, in Woodbine, New Jersey.

Our small community school serves approximately 225 students in grades pre-K through 8, with a free and reduced lunch rate of 80 percent. In my capacity as the Supervisor, it is my responsibility to oversee the preschool program to make sure that all of our components are being met.

Our preschool journey began in 2008, when we were fortunate to be one of the four school districts in the State of New Jersey, and the only one in Cape May County, to get the preschool expansion moneys. This grant has allowed us to implement the high-quality preschool program with a research-based curriculum to our at-risk student population. Through the use of the grant, we are able to serve a greater percentage of our community, earlier identify students with potential learning difficulties,

and put interventions in place much sooner, provide support and education for parents and caregivers, and expose students to the foundational skills necessary for future academic success.

Prior to 2008, our preschool program consisted of one class of 15 4-year-old students. Over the last five years, because of our grant funding, we have been able to expand our program to three classes with a total of 45 3- and 4-year-old students, thus allowing us to meet the needs of more than 100 percent of our universe of eligible children within the Woodbine community.

Each preschool classroom currently has a highly qualified classroom teacher with a preschool through 3rd grade certification, and a teaching assistant. Both the teacher and the assistant are fully trained on the curriculum and receive ongoing professional development. The students learn basic concepts in math, science, and literature through art, music, and play-based learning. Without our preschool moneys, we would have not been able to purchase more appropriate playground equipment for our young children, or SMART Boards and iPads in each of our classrooms targeting the needs of the 21st century learner.

The teachers use ongoing documentation through a performance-based assessment to assess the students' strengths and weaknesses. Ongoing analysis allows all members of the preschool program to ensure that all of the needs of the students are being met within a manner appropriate to their individual needs.

The grant has also afforded us the opportunity to earlier identify and address students with potential learning difficulties. Through the use of the early screening inventory, we are able to assess the students

within the first six weeks of school to determine if they may be at risk for future learning difficulties. Early identification allows us to make earlier referrals to the preschool intervention team and for strategies to be generated to meet the individual needs of the students.

It has been noted that many of the students who receive the support of the preschool intervention and referral team are exited prior to entering 1st grade due to academic success. For those students who come in from early intervention, we are able to continue to provide supplemental services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech; while providing them with the social interaction of their typically developing peers and exposure to academic concepts.

In addition, we have been able to use some of our resources to create a parent center and encourage our preschool parents to take an active role in their child's education. Our parents participate in workshops and play days where we take an opportunity to show them how to interact with their children, how to have conversations with their children, and other academic areas. Parents are also involved in the decision-making aspect of our program through the early childhood advisory council. By inviting our parents to be partners in education, there is greater value in the education process, and skill reinforcement continues within the home.

Finally, the preschool grant has given us the opportunity to provide a high-quality educational foundation with rich language and experiences to 45 at-risk children in our community. Without this program, our students would enter Kindergarten ill-prepared and at a strong disadvantage. Instead, our students are leaving preschool and entering Kindergarten as confident learners with a strong desire to continue to learn,

as well as increased social skills and problem-solving abilities. This has shown an increased academic growth, and a decreased number of behavioral interventions and child study team referrals necessary in Kindergarten and beyond.

In an *A* district like ours, the success of our programs and the students' future academic successes is dependent on a strong, solid preschool program.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you very much.

SUPERINTENDENT LYNDA ANDERSON-TOWNS: Good morning.

My name is Lynda Anderson-Towns, and I'm Superintendent of Woodbine School District in Cape May County.

As previously mentioned by my Preschool Supervisor, Ms. Celine Kaelble, we are a district of many at-risk children. Although Cape May County is a relatively affluent district, our school district, along with Wildwood School District, is considered one of the *A* district factor groups. So we do have many challenges and constraints. And actually at Woodbine, I consider it an urban-rural district. So it does have quite a different profile than many of the school districts in Cape May County -- low tax rates, high special education costs, and truly heavy reliance upon Federal and State. And we do use a lot of private grant moneys as well.

But walking into a school district similar to Woodbine -- and I have been a Superintendent for about six years -- I realized quickly that it was a school district that would be considered a *turn-around* school district. I quickly determined that we needed to start at the beginning. When the

preschool expansion grant arose, my first thought was that it could only be a win-win for my students. Again, as Cynthia mentioned, we had a lot of young parents. They certainly are willing and open to learning.

But the first step, I felt, was to bring them into the school community earlier. Certainly, as I looked at my Kindergarten students, I saw-- At the very beginning we administered an instrument called DIBELS, which is dynamic early assessment of -- just basic early literacy skills -- to our Kindergarten students. And at that point we saw that about 70 percent of the Kindergarten students needed intensive intervention. I quickly realized that we needed to get ahead of the game sooner.

The following year is when the grant arose. Although a relatively rookie superintendent -- many of my other superintendent colleagues were certainly very interested -- I knew it was critical for my district. However, there were challenges. We were small; we only had 230 students. We had to convince the Department of Education that this program that had, as my Supervisor mentioned, so many facets -- we'd be able to meet every one of the components to make certain that it had its true integrity. We went right to work. We truly worked very hard, taking, in some cases, double roles to make certain that our students really got the very best.

I really need to pause here to give kudos to the New Jersey Department of Education, because they did such a phenomenal job in training everyone who was connected to the preschool program -- from teachers, to assistants, to supervisors, to directors. Everyone received training. I received training as a leader in early education. That was so beneficial. I always say to anyone who I encounter from NJDOE, "What a

phenomenal job they did in the early implementation of the preschool program.” No stone was left unturned in training.

So I really felt that, again, as we moved forward in it -- Cape May County, Woodbine School District, has been brought to light by the preschool program. It made us what is considered a *turn-around* school district.

Thank you.

RONNIE DOUGHERTY: Good morning.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Ronnie Dougherty. I'm a Principal of an elementary school in Freehold Borough, and I also serve as the early childhood specialist for my district. I've been in education in Freehold Borough for 24 years. And it really has taught me the importance of a quality preschool education for all of our students -- our 4-year-olds.

The Freehold Borough District has 1,507 students. Our community is represented by a diversity of culture and socio-economic status. Seventy-seven percent of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

In 2004, our District applied for funding that would allow us to expand our existing half-day preschool for the following school year. Unfortunately, the expansion formula was never fully funded and, consequently-- As has been said, four districts received funds. We were not one of them.

Due to a very strong belief -- we were driven by a strong belief in quality preschool and available research. We made the decision to go

ahead with our plans for preschool. We adopted the Tools of the Mind curriculum, and we advertised in our community. The response from our community was so great that we had to hold a lottery and put 63 students on a waiting list. Our Kindergarten teachers reported that the students graduating from our preschool programs had the readiness skills that students needed to be successful.

Sadly, due to an underfunded budget, we were only able to support this program for two years. It was a difficult and painful decision. However, the next year we moved back to a half-day program. We thought that this might -- this change might allow us to service twice as many students and alleviate the need for a lottery and a waiting list. However, that's not what happened. The reality was that we had no waiting list and certainly no need for a lottery. The working parents in our community needed a full-day program.

We began to keep data on the students who were in our full-day program, and the results were so dramatic. The group of students who attended our full-day preschool were tracked through 3rd grade. When we looked at the data collected from the 3rd grade -- NJASK -- we found that 100 percent of our students who attended our full-day preschool scored proficient in language arts and math. On a whole, this group scored 30 percent higher in language arts and 24 percent higher in math than their peers who did not attend full-day preschool. These results were in contrast to our students who did not attend our full-day program. We found that when we went to a half-day program, many of our students were placed with babysitters who took care of large groups of kids. And what compounded the situation -- that many of our students went home to

families that were poorly educated and unable to work with them at home. This resulted in students beginning Kindergarten without the readiness skills they needed.

Data collected on our incoming students who had not attended preschool demonstrated that 20 percent of these students coming into Kindergarten did not know their letters, their numbers, their colors, or their shapes -- their basic skills. Many of them were unfamiliar with books and could not make the relationship between the pictures, the text, and the stories. And, in fact, some of them did not even know how to hold the book and actually turn the pages of them. Mastery of these essential skills is crucial to a successful Kindergarten experience. Teachers also reported that these students lacked the ability to self-regulate behavior and had difficulty interacting with their peers.

In addition, data that followed these students through the grades demonstrated that the achievement gap just grew wider, causing the need to hire more basic skills teachers to service these students.

The 20 percent of the students who were identified in Kindergarten continue to struggle. Research shows that one-sixth of 3rd graders reading below grade level will not graduate on time. Third grade is the point in which children shift from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.

We believe that every child deserves what's good enough for a child you love. High-quality preschool strengthens the likelihood of school success for children.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Do we have any questions?

Senator Rice.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, I listened to them.

Now, Freehold-- Are the legislators who are representing that district visiting or connecting with you with those issues in Freehold? And the reason I raise that-- I've been here 27 years, and I've seen people come and go, and I hear the rhetoric, and I hear the substance. And there are those of us, in both Houses, who have been pushing to really fund all-day preschool opportunities, and Kindergarten, and everything else. Then the debate becomes, "Let's tell the folks who we represent that we support that." But the problem is that we're giving too much money to urbans, and therefore we have an excuse for them to think we're good guys and we want to help.

Well, we're getting around that debate. The question is: The Freehold-type districts don't come to our attention. When we're arguing -- debating money, what happens is, the elected officials in both Houses line up, and I suspect they listen to the majority, or they count votes, or whatever they do. But no one ever stands up and says, "I know my district is doing well. But in Freehold there is a problem, and we need to fix that problem while you're trying to fix the others. In Woodbine there is a problem."

We don't hear that. What we hear is, "You shouldn't get money in the districts that really need it." And the public knows we need it. We should take some of that back, which means that we're going to throw money away because we're going to fund something that's not properly funded, which means it's not going to work. But we'll take some and put it over here. And then we're not going to make you whole over here either. Then everybody is happy.

So I'm just asking, in these Woodbines and the Freehold districts, are the legislators talking to you? And are you having the debate, "Look, we know the district is doing well. We know we may be the only ones situated like this in the district. But we're people too, these are our kids too. Rather than pushing back politically, could you at least fight to get us into that piece that's going out there?" Is that happening?

MS. DOUGHERTY: Yes, we've been very fortunate. Senator Beck has been a wonderful advocate for our district and has spoken on our behalf. And we're always hoping that those words will fall on ears that can help us. But we have been very fortunate in that area.

SENATOR RICE: As we go through this budget, I'm going to see if we can get her to vote on your behalf. See, speaking on it is one thing. But there are line items in the budget dealing with this that we need to have the votes on in both Houses. There are things that we believe are necessary for districts like yours. And we believe that we should be voting for that stuff. That's the problem I'm having. What people say is not often repeated here in the Legislature, in either House, by their actions. And then they'll come back to you and justify with some lame excuse. And that excuse is usually more political in nature in terms of the intent, than where it's a heart.

So I just want to be clear, because we have the time to take a look at the problems in all the districts as the Joint Committee. And we don't pass legislation, we can recommend it. But as we ask you to be honest with us, it is our responsibility as Republicans and Democrats, Democrats and Republicans -- whichever one you want to put first, we're co-equals -- to be honest with you too. And I believe honesty should be

about what your representatives are doing too. And I'm telling you that I haven't seen that vote yet and I haven't heard that voice here. And so we're going through a budget cycle now, and we'll be looking at this tough budget. But kids have to come first, and we have to start down here, etc.

So I just wanted to raise that because I think it was very important to raise.

And the other thing is that maybe sometime in the future -- because we stay so busy -- we need to take a look, Madam Co-Chair, at maybe holding a couple of hearings down in the Freehold area, Woodbine, etc. Because they don't see us enough or hear from us enough. And it would be interesting, when we invite their legislators, what they would have to say for the record that we can bring back here and hold them accountable to on the record.

MS. DOUGHERTY: That would be greatly appreciated.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just want to acknowledge Senator Greenstein who has joined us.

And I would just like to comment and say that your testimony -- all the testimony was wonderful because you're in the field. You get it, you know what we need. And you spoke of the success -- that if we invest early, we will prevent problems down the line. And I'm glad that you took the trip here because, honestly, Woodbine -- I had no idea. (laughter) Freehold I've heard of. But I think Senator Rice has a very valid point that maybe it's time for us to come down to your area and see what you're doing, and hold a hearing there.

With only so much money -- and it will be a very stressful budget, we know that -- it's what are our priorities. And I think your case is very well presented, and we just have to get that word out more and more.

But I thank you.

Is there anyone else who has anything -- any questions?

SUPERINTENDENT ANDERSON-TOWNS: I'd just like to add-- And I know this will take us in another direction, but maybe it's just timely. Not only is our district one that is a preschool expansion, but this year we are looking at expanding our school breakfast program as well. And the testimony we heard earlier-- Again, with 84 percent, I worried about the 15, 16 percent that was left. Because I knew that even if they were not free or reduced lunch, they were borderline. And so one of the questions that arose was: How do you make up the difference for those who just pay so that they don't seem to stand out from the other students? And what our district did was to reach out to private grants that we had and asked if we may use some of their funding to make up that difference. And so this will be our first year of also doing breakfast in the classrooms. So we're excited about it.

Again, as an administrator and school leader, my goal is to make sure that every child comes in to school every morning, whether they're early or late, ready to learn. So I look at that as a Superintendent. You have to look at the whole picture. And what I hope is evident from all of us is that we really work hard to find everything that's out there, not just from the budgets -- Federally or State -- but even privately we look. We're aggressive.

SENATOR RICE: Madam Chair, a quick comment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: I think that's good. And my public position and my heartfelt position is very simple. At the State level I've argued this. I've done a lot of research. I know the actors. Some of my colleagues know them, some don't; they don't choose to know them. But all these hedge fund people -- that's our money they're investing. All these folks who have privatized -- who want to privatize public education, all these corporations that we support -- their goods and services we pay for -- that are behind the scenes supporting all this privatization-- Number one, they need to be compelled to do the right thing. What I'm saying is that you get these Prudential-type folks up in my areas and all these "corporate" folks, and they tell us, "If you give us tax credits -- because we're concerned with education -- we'll do *A, B, C*." What they're really telling us subliminally is, "Give us some tax credit, and we'll privatize your public education system."

My whole attitude about the tax credit and all this back-door stuff is, it isn't going to happen on my watch. But I tell corporate America, "I'll work with you. If you want some tax credit-- Then what you're saying to New Jersey's parents and legislators, is that 'We're concerned about the kids having a quality education. We're concerned about the kind of education they're getting so they can be a productive workforce in the future based on the needs that we have too. And therefore we're willing to invest in that.'" Well, if you're willing to do that, don't tell us where to put the money. Because we're smart enough to know in this State, as the Senator said, that money needs to be put for when the kids (indiscernible). We're talking about long-term involvement. "And so if, in fact, you want some tax credits, don't come to me talking about some opportunity

afterward,” or whatever that back-door stuff is they’re trying to put through here with some of our colleagues in both Houses. “Come to me and let’s talk about tax credits for helping preschool and early childhood education. Because then I know that we don’t lose control of public education, but we do get, in the long-term, the kind of productive youngster we want.” And we probably could do a better job of connecting the parent to that education. And that’s something all of us should be looking at. And every time Lesniak and the rest of these folks come up and talk about Opportunity Education (*sic*) Act, or whatever you call that thing, tell them, “No. We want the tax credit.” We should call up corporate America and say, “We want to know who wants the tax credits.” Let’s have a conversation with us, not those outsiders, not those local mayors, not those voucher people and things like that.

And you have to be advocates for that. There is no shame in being an advocate for students. If you lose your job, you use it. We lost a lot of stuff in the struggle, right? But we’re free people now. Women’s rights -- ’60s. (laughter)

SENATOR THOMPSON: Senator, since you raised the subject of tax credit for (indiscernible) of education, I will just state my general policy on it.

I can’t say I won’t support any, but generally I’m not too in favor of giving businesses tax credits to give money for schools and so on. The reason being, when we give them a tax credit-- For every dollar they spend, that’s a dollar less they pay in taxes. But really what we’re telling them is, they can take State money, and they can put it where they want to,

and then they get credit for doing a good thing (laughter), when really that didn't cost them a dime. That was State money.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: That's right.

SENATOR THOMPSON: And we're going to put that money there. We might as well do it ourselves instead of letting them do it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Exactly.

You know, we do agree on some things. (laughter)

And I have to say also-- Listen, we're lucky that we have you in the educational field. And it's very rare that people compliment people when they're doing a good job. It's very rare that we do that. And it's good to hear that you got the training you needed to make it so successful. And I don't know what's happened through the years. And we've been in education for quite a while. Somewhere we fell asleep at the wheel, and now we've got to get it back before we lose control and condemn an entire generation. So with your kind of leadership, I know that we're going to be right back on top.

Thank you very, very much.

SUPERINTENDENT ANDERSON-TOWNS: Thank you for having us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: We now have Adele LaTourette, the Director of the New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition.

A D E L E H. L a T O U R E T T E: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you.

MS. LaTOURETTE: And I'm going to follow up talking more about school breakfast, so it's kind of a perfect mix.

I'm not going to read exactly what I have written. I'm going to kind of talk a little bit -- follow up a little bit on what's been said. The Secretary talked about our increase of 16.3 percent, which is fabulous. However, even with that increase, it only brings us up to 46th in the entire nation in the number of children we're serving school breakfast, so it's not exactly something to hugely cheer about. There is more work to be done.

And I thought you might find it interesting to know some of the districts that really could use improvement. We have Lodi, in which only 11 percent of free and reduced priced children are participating in breakfast. We have Haledon -- and you will probably notice that these are targeted to your districts -- with only 11 percent participating. We have Carteret with 15, Union City with 16, Prospect Park with 16, Hoboken with 18, Jersey City with 18. That's 77 percent who are not participating.

I don't want to go through a bunch of numbers, but suffice it to say, there are 64 districts in the state that are considered under achievers in school breakfast. If these 64 districts were brought up in their participation, we would have about 88,300 more students receiving breakfast. And the big kicker: We would have \$28.8 million more Federal dollars coming into the State.

The numbers-- I want to talk a little bit about the Food for Thought Coalition that the ACNJ talked about. We are partners with them in that Coalition. It is a broad-based Coalition that includes the Department of Ag, the Department of Ed, the principals and Supervisors, the NJEA. It's a great Coalition and has done fabulous work. But when you hear those numbers, you hear that there is more work to be done. And we hope that you will take those numbers back to your colleagues and talk

to people in your own districts and say, "What are the issues that are preventing breakfast after the bell," which as you've heard is definitely the model to serve breakfast. You cannot count on children getting to school to eat breakfast before the bell. It just is not happening. You need to serve it after the bell. And you need to make sure it's a nutritious breakfast. We can't overlook that either.

So there is work to be done at the local level. But I have to say that I will take issue with one of the things that Secretary Fisher said, and say that there is stuff that can be done on the State level too. One of the things that happened -- actually under the Governor's first budget -- is that he cut the \$0.10 per meal school breakfast incentive. That was a \$3 million cut, which is not a lot of money. And I will say it was underutilized.

What the Coalition believes -- and I'm speaking now for the New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition -- what we believe is that you need to take that -- reinstate that \$0.10 per meal reimbursement for school breakfast served after the bell -- and I know this is something that the Advocates for Children of New Jersey agree with us on as well -- targeted to those districts that are making the program the most accessible to students.

The other thing we believe needs to happen is that school lunch money -- the State's portion -- was reduced to a minimum -- just the minimum, barely enough, just to make sure we got the Federal reimbursement. And we think that money again needs to be raised to what it was.

Now, these two budget items total \$5.4 million. It's not a lot of money. But, again, looking holistically at how we feed our children-- Many of the ways that we feed our children are through our schools. And

when you look at what has and is considered the most important meal of the day, I think we really need to, as a State, look at how we can improve our numbers -- I don't want to say *numbers* -- how we can improve feeding our children. Because that's really what it's all about.

I always say that we can build fabulous schools, we can have fresh new books, but if you have a child who has not eaten breakfast, it really doesn't make a difference. They are not going to learn. So I think it's critical that we look at how we can improve our school breakfast program. And we look at it from the community level. And the Food for Thought Coalition has been doing that -- helping communities build those local coalitions with parents, and teachers, and local advocates. But also look at it from the State level and look at the \$3 million cut and say, "Okay, it wasn't being used. But maybe if we target it better and get the word out to schools that if they serve breakfast after the bell, they'll get this \$0.10 per meal reimbursement." There are ways to increase the number of kids being served and, therefore, the number of kids who can learn.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you.

I just want to say that I thank you for your report. Because if we didn't have your report, we would not have gone into Lodi. But we went into Lodi based on seeing 11 percent. And we did get it up. It's around 22 percent, maybe, right now. It's not where it should be. We have a long way to go, but we got it up just by having them change the letter.

So I thank you for your report, and I thank you for your suggestions for the budget -- things that we just didn't know.

SENATOR RICE: You gave some numbers and I was trying to write them. But if you have written testimony -- if not, if Melanie can get that information. I think it's important.

Where I disagree with you is, if we don't feed these kids, they are going to learn. I'll tell you what they're going to learn. They're going to learn how to steal, they're going to learn how to take someone else's food, or whatever they're putting in their mouths at a tender age, and get away with it. And they're going to grow up thinking it's okay. Because we are products of our environment, and most of what we do are learned behaviors. What we don't want them to learn is how to start taking from others who have, rather than sharing. By the same token, we don't want them hungry. So it's important that we take a look at those numbers and figure out how we can work them back into the budget conversation as we move along.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Senator Greenstein.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Thank you.

Good morning.

MS. LaTOURETTE: Good morning.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: I may have missed this since I came in late, but-- I have not seen the report, actually. What is the reason why people are not signing up for these breakfasts? You said the towns need to work on it, there needs to be a better--

MS. LaTOURETTE: There are a lot of-- It's a complex issue. I would say the primary reason is that breakfast is essentially served at the wrong time of the day. You need to serve breakfast after the bell when the children are actually at the school, instead of before the bell before they've

gotten to the school. That's what we have seen as the most efficient and accessible way to serve the meal.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Are any of the schools doing it that way?

MS. LaTOURETTE: They are. And more and more are because of the Food for Thought campaign. I think ACNJ should be up. They left, unfortunately. And more and more are. But it's a challenge. And in different communities it's a challenge for different reasons. It's because it's a change, and change is difficult. It's because there are people-- As Secretary Fisher said, people see obstacles where really there aren't any. And what we see as a rule universally is that once they start serving breakfast after the bell it's like an awakening. And they say, "Oh, my gosh, this wasn't nearly as difficult as we thought. And the kids behave better, and they learn better." It's a whole different (indiscernible)--

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: So it isn't a matter of the families not signing up, it's the schools and the steps they take.

MS. LaTOURETTE: It could be a combination, absolutely. We have done campaigns. Actually, we did a campaign through community-based organizations in Paterson where we did help families sign up. It takes a village on a multitude of levels. You have to help them sign up, you have to make sure the applications are in the right language and they understand what it means, and then you have to make the program accessible.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: This seems to me to be something that's very doable and so important. And I just hope that we can -- if we

haven't already -- develop a really good educational campaign to make sure that these families are signing up.

MS. LaTOURETTE: Yes, I think that's a great idea. I think it's something we could certainly work with Ag and Ed on. And I do think that it's something we need to pay more attention to.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I'm glad you brought Paterson up, because obviously you're aware of the situation a couple of weeks ago.

MS. LaTOURETTE: Yes, I am.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: It's become a union issue, which I can't understand, even as a union member. I think anything that can benefit children-- And it shows increase in numbers. How can you argue against it?

And I think the reality is that after the bell -- and particularly in urban areas -- it's going to work at a much higher rate. So I don't know what I can do to help out with that or advocate for it.

But when I read the article, I was just really kind of baffled. "How could you, as an educator, not want your students to eat if this is proven -- the number is proven?" So whatever statistics or whatever you can get through Melanie -- through the Executive Director -- that could help me push and advocate for this, I would definitely like to be on board. Because I'm in total agreement that after the bell it just makes a lot more sense.

Being a homeroom teacher for nine years, kids will walk in regardless with -- I hate it. The worst breakfast in the world is a buttered roll and, as they call, *quarter water*. It's water juice that they drink at 8:00 in the morning. So, I mean, if we give them a fresh meal and make sure they're not stopping at the corner store eating something that's sugar-laced and salt-laced, it just makes sense.

MS. LaTOURETTE: I will be happy to be in touch with Melanie. And I agree with you about Paterson. I think, again, there's that disconnect of what the goal is here. And really the goal should be making sure kids eat breakfast because you want to educate your kids. So yes, we will be in touch. We'd be happy to work with you in terms of overcoming--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And have you run into this problem in any other districts outside of Paterson?

MS. LaTOURETTE: Specific to-- We run into anything from schools not having dumpsters and therefore can't do it, to issues with-- It really depends on the schools.

In terms of teachers, I think the most important thing is to bring teachers into the conversation. You have to bring everyone into the conversation. You have to have teachers around the table, you have to have janitors around the table, you have to have administrators around the table. Before you kind of go in and say we're going to do this, you need to bring every one on board and say, "What our goal is, is to educate our children. To do that they need to eat." So you have to kind of do it the right way. And I think that's one of the issues in Paterson.

But I know that there is good will there and I know there is intent there to help those kids out. So I am hoping that we will resolve that issue and that we'll get more breakfast after the bell programs.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And since that objection, has everybody come to the table now? Has the union and--

MS. LaTOURETTE: I'm hoping that that's what is happening, yes. I'm hoping.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: But initially that didn't happen; it was just placed there.

MS. LaTOURETTE: I'm not sure that it did. That's one of the things that I believe the union is saying. They were kind of blindsided by this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay.

MS. LaTOURETTE: So we need to make sure that in other districts we bring everyone around and say, "This is our goal. We need to work in partnership together to do this."

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay. Fix Paterson, and then you can move on. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Lynda, I would also like to add that--

Oh, Adele, I'm sorry. (laughter) I had a late night last night.

MS. LaTOURETTE: That's okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: In regard to Lodi-- We also went out after that and did a little media event to get into their local newspaper. And that's how we got some more families. Because unfortunately, with kids -- and I worked in a school -- they bring home their

bags and all those papers. God knows where they end up. So we wanted parents to become aware, even through their local newspaper, that this was available.

And when you talk about local districts -- and I worked in one -- that they didn't want you eating in school. They didn't want the crumbs, they didn't want anything. It was a Board of Health issue. "We don't want to clean up the mess," instead of taking on the attitude that in a classroom you can learn responsibility of cleaning up after yourself, and that could work.

I'm from the day of -- when we had the little graham crackers and milk, and we had a break everyday. And that seemed to work, and we didn't have any problems. And then we just got away from -- "Nope, it's your problem; not our problem." I even saw kids have their privileges suspended because they brought food to beyond where they could take food.

So, again, it's a matter of changing the culture and getting it out there. And I'm convinced that we can do this. But I thank you for your testimony and your reports. And I hope that next year you see that, because now you've challenged me to get back in there. (laughter)

Thank you very much.

MS. LaTOURETTE: Thank you, everybody.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: So we have Kate Sims and Emily Kilroy. Kate is from the Food Research Action Center in Washington, D.C.; and Emily is from School-Aged Coalition, New Jersey School-Aged Coalition.

Thank you very much.

EMILY KILROY: Thank you to the members of this Committee for inviting us to speak this morning.

My name is Emily Kilroy, and I'm the Director for Special Projects for the New Jersey School-Aged Care Coalition, which is the statewide network for after school. I'm going to speak about after-school programs and a Federal snack and supper program.

After-school programs are a proven setting to improve children's academic, social, and emotional development. Thanks to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, they're increasingly able to support the development of healthy habits and address hunger in children. The CACFP At-Risk Meals Program provides Federal reimbursement to after-school enrichment programs serving snack or supper to students in low-income communities. To qualify for these funds, the food served must meet strict nutritional requirements and meal patterns. This is important because studies show that students consuming healthy foods in school actually replace junk foods in their diet. That means that they're taking in less fat, less calories, and less sugar.

The At-Risk Meals Program addresses both hunger and nutrition issues facing today's youth. In New Jersey, nearly one in three youth aged 10 to 17 are overweight or obese. New Jersey was recently found to have the highest rate of obese, low-income children age 2 to 5 in the United States. Across all income levels, over 34 percent of children age 2 to 5 in New Jersey are overweight or obese. As these children continue to age, the obesity and overweight rates in the school-age population will also increase. This contributes to a lifetime of poor health outcomes and increases costs.

Further, 11.5% of households in NJ experience food hardship, meaning households have to choose between buying food and meeting other basic needs like medical expenses or rent. Over half of the children enrolled in after-school programs in New Jersey qualify for free or reduced lunch, meaning that the after-school population is a high-needs population. Despite this need, utilization rates of the At-Risk Meals Program in New Jersey are low, with only 7 percent of qualifying students receiving supper statewide. This program provides participating after-school programs with the reimbursement of \$0.78 per child per day for snacks and \$2.86 per child per day for meals. Eligibility is determined using the National School Lunch Program data from neighboring schools, looking at free and reduced-price lunch eligibility. All children attending an after-school program in a qualifying area receive the full rate of reimbursement. So after-school programs do not have to individually qualify their students, and there is no stigma attached to receiving a meal. For many students in these communities, the breakfast and lunch they receive in school are the only meals they get access to. By providing supper, we help to ensure these youths have the nutrients they need to thrive.

The Newark Public School District was an early adopter of the At-Risk Meals Program. They provide both a snack and a supper to all of the children participating in their school-based after-school programs. Over 21,000 students participate daily, which represents 60 percent of their school district enrollment. Over the course of a school year, participation in the At-Risk Meals Program brings in over \$10 million in Federal reimbursements for suppers in the Newark School District. In fact, Newark students represent a full 80 percent of statewide participation in this

program. So if Newark were to stop doing the program, the utilization in the state would drop significantly.

The Program is only in its second year in New Jersey, but growth has been slow. Utilization has increased by a fraction of 1 percent this year -- the second year. Statewide, suppers served through the At-Risk Meals Program currently bring in over \$13 million per year. If all programs in eligible communities enrolled in served suppers, this Program could bring in an additional \$175 million each year.

NJSAC has been working to increase awareness and provide technical assistance to after-school programs in qualifying communities. We've profiled successful programs implementing the program in New Brunswick, Trenton, and Rahway. We've created a two-page on the program and a longer guide book for navigating the forms in New Jersey. We've also created -- and I should have brought this up earlier.

HEARING REPORTER: I'm so sorry. You can't speak from there. I don't record you unless you have a microphone. I'm so sorry. One of the small ones.

MS. KILROY: One of the small ones.

HEARING REPORTER: Yes, the small black one right there.

Thank you.

MS. KILROY: This is an interactive map. And you can see -- if I could reach it -- that the geography of eligibility is really varied throughout the state. So any municipality that's shaded in orange is partially eligible for the program, meaning that some of the schools in that district would qualify. And so after-school programs operating near or in those schools would qualify. And clicking on a municipality brings up a list of the schools

in the municipality that are eligible. And then the green shaded communities are considered area-eligible, so all of the schools qualify. And so any after-school program operating in that area would be able to participate in the program.

I think that NJSAC just wants you to be aware that this program is out there. The funds are there; they just have to be requested. And we think it's a really great way for after-school programs to bring in a steady stream of funding and also to provide a more holistic -- more holistically provide for the needs of our children.

Thank you.

KATE A. SIMS: Hello, everyone.

Thank you so much to NJSAC for inviting me to speak today, and to all of you for including this very important topic on the agenda for today's Committee hearing.

My name is Kate Sims, and I'm the Outreach and Training Coordinator for the Child Nutrition Unit at the Food Research and Action Center. I work primarily on the Summer Food Service Program and the at-risk after-school component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program, most simply called the Afterschool Meals Program. I work with State agencies, program providers, and sponsors to help expand these vital child nutrition programs nationwide.

In your packets you will find FRACs Afterschool Meals Program fact sheet. I'm going to talk about Maryland as a case example for tremendous participation growth over the past three years, and the Federal funding dollars that have been brought into the state, as well as sponsor models from Maryland; FRACs summary of recent USDA guidance for

school food authorities to more seamlessly administer this program; and an example of a senate bill summary from the state of Oregon that was enacted in 2011 to financially support the Afterschool Meals Program, in addition to the Federal funding brought into that state.

Offering a healthy, nutritious meal during the after-school hours has numerous benefits for children, families, and after-school programs. Participating in the Afterschool Meals Program ensures that hungry children have access to nutritious meals beyond school breakfast and lunch, increases participation in after-school programs, keeps youth engaged and learning and involved in safe activities while their parents are at work, and improves retention rates for valuable after-school programs.

The Afterschool Meals Program also can help combat childhood obesity. School-aged children have higher daily intake of fruits, vegetables, milk, and key nutrients like calcium, vitamin A, and folate on days they eat Federally funded supper at an after-school program, compared to days they do not.

These are the current reimbursement rates for the 2012-2013 school year. The rates are set annually by Congress and increase from year to year. You will notice a cash in lieu of commodities valued at \$0.2275 per lunch or supper that is also available to providers. In order to qualify for reimbursement, the meals and snacks served must meet Federal nutrition standards. Sponsors of individual Afterschool Meals Program sites are required to collect daily meal counts and attendance records in order to be reimbursed for all the meals and snacks served.

After-school programs are able to serve up to one meal and one snack per day. On weekdays, programs can serve a supper and snack; and

on the weekends could serve a breakfast or lunch and a snack. There is no requirement that the snack be served before the meal, or vice versa, such that when the children first arrive after school they could be served the meal and then served the snack before going home. There is also no requirement that dictates how many days of the week your program is open or is serving meals and snacks. We encourage after-school programs regularly operating on weekdays to consider operating the program during the weekend and over school holiday breaks.

Participating after-school programs are reimbursed per each meal or snack they serve, which means that the funding the program receives will increase as participation grows. For example, an after-school program that is serving meals to 50 children could receive about \$27,720 per year in Federal funding. Serving a snack in addition to a meal increases that funding to more than \$34,740 in Federal money per year to support an after-school program. The reimbursement should be used to cover food costs, but can also be used to add more fresh fruits and vegetables to the meals and snacks served, as well as to support some administrative costs of operating the program.

Thanks to the effort of Congresswoman Donna Edwards, and the advocacy of the anti-hunger organization Maryland Hunger Solutions, Congress added Maryland to the Afterschool Meals Program in the spring of 2009, making it one of only 13 states and the District of Columbia to receive Federal funding to provide after-school meals at that time. The Maryland State Department of Education successfully administered the new program, and the first suppers were served in October 2009. By conducting effective outreach and providing critical technical assistance to after-school

providers across the state, 126 after-school programs provided after-school meals to 3,404 children by the end of the 2009-2010 school year. By the end of the 2011-2012 school year, an average of 11,433 children received a healthy and nutritious meal during their after-school program daily at 440 sites statewide.

The most effective expansion strategy used in Maryland to achieve the rapid growth in the Afterschool Meals Program was to target existing snack sites and encourage them to transition into supper. These sites were already participating in one of the Federal nutrition programs, and were familiar with program requirements. They also understood the importance of providing children with nutritious food after school. Local school systems have also recognized the value of participating in the Afterschool Meals Program, realizing the benefits a full meal provides to their students.

The swift growth in the Afterschool Meals Program has brought a significant amount of Federal funding into Maryland. Since the program was implemented in October 2009, Maryland has received more than \$11.4 million in Federal reimbursement dollars for meals served. But there remains substantial room for growth in the Afterschool Meals Program. Maryland could continue to see significant gains in the amount of Federal dollars coming into the state which will, in turn, bolster the local economy for years to come.

School nutrition departments are able and in a good position to sponsor the Afterschool Meals Program. They have tremendous expertise in operating Federal child nutrition programs, developing menus, and preparing and purchasing food. In addition, after-school meals could

support the financial health of a school district's school nutrition programs because all meals are reimbursed at the highest free rate, and the meals could be provided with a minimal increase in labor costs. At the same time, after-school meals provide the school nutrition department another opportunity to support the health and well being of their students.

When the school nutrition department sponsors the Afterschool Meals Program, it substantially decreases the amount of administrative work for an after-school program. It is the school nutrition department, not the after-school program, that is administratively and fiscally responsible for operating the Afterschool Meals Program. This school nutrition department fills out the application, develops the menus, prepares the food, keeps track of the total number of meals and snacks served, and submits said number each month to the state CACFP agency. Schools can provide a maximum of one meal and one snack, with the snack being reimbursed through either CACFP or the National School Lunch Program. The reimbursement that the school nutrition department receives is for the cost of food, labor, and other costs associated with operating after-school meals. A maximum of 15 percent of the reimbursement can go toward the school nutrition department's administrative costs. You will find an example of how an Afterschool Meals Program can be structured when sponsoring -- when sponsored by a school food authority in your packets, as well as the structure of Afterschool Meals Programs sponsored by nonschool sponsors.

USDA's Food Nutrition Service, this past November, came out with new guidance for school food authorities to streamline the process for them to operate the Afterschool Meals Program. This new guidance creates

an exciting opportunity to increase the number of schools participating, expanding children's access to the nutritious after-school meals they need. Because states are not required to implement many of the streamlining provisions outlined in the guidance, it is crucial to encourage state agencies to adopt the new options.

In addition, once states have streamlined their requirements for schools, highlighting the reduction in administrative work can help recruit SFAs to participate in the Afterschool Meals Program. Again, in your packets, FRACs summary of the streamlining guidance can be found.

These new options now available include the ability to enter into a single agreement with the state agency for school food authorities operating more than one child nutrition program. School food authorities now have the option to simply add an addendum to an existing National School Lunch Program application with pertinent additional information in order to apply for CACFP. School food authorities are not required to attend additional state agency trainings related to CACFP. School food authorities can choose between the National School Lunch Program or CACFP meal patterns. School food authorities are not required to allocate expenses separately for each child nutrition program they operate, as well as the option to follow NSLP procurement and contracting procedures. And state agencies must combine their monitoring requirements for SFAs operating both CACFP and NSLP.

So thank you for letting me present today. And I am now happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Well, you just brought us a lot of good news here that we're trying to read. We're even reading here of a bill here that -- copy of a bill that Oregon had put forward.

And you talk about that it's only been existence for two years. I guess you're getting it off the ground. What is the hesitancy? Because this seems like a no-brainer.

MS. SIMS: It actually goes back very similarly to the issues with implementing school breakfast. I've met with lots of school food service directors who are just very overwhelmed by running the school meals. We also actually run into union issues where we'll say the food service workers can prepare all the after-school meals during the day. But then to allow the after-school program providers to hand out the meals, there is an accountability of whether they would be appropriately trained to check off the attendance records with the meal counts.

MS. KILROY: In New Jersey, some of the issues are that some after-school programs are very small and have volunteer staffs. And the training -- the way that training works here in New Jersey, it's a three-day training. The dates aren't always-- The dates are not publicly available. You have to be in contact with someone with the State agency in order to be notified of an upcoming training. They're only held a couple times a year and only in Trenton. So programs that are located sort of further afield in New Jersey, three days of training in Trenton for their staff is a lot for them to sort of handle. And that's why we are really-- We were really glad to hear about the USDA memo about the school food authority streamlining efforts, because that would eliminate a lot of the paperwork and training requirements that after-school -- the smaller after-school

programs just find really cumbersome. And under the At-Risk Meals Program, the after-school program itself doesn't have to be a sponsor. They can be sponsored by another organization. So they can partner with their local school which is in the business of making meals for kids five days a week -- to get them to do the vending for the after-school program. So that would be a real win for after-school programs in New Jersey.

MS. SIMS: I will also add, administratively, the challenge is this program was created under the umbrella of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. And so what we find with a lot of state agencies in implementing this program and making it available, is there is conflicting audiences sometimes in the world of child care as opposed to after-school programs. So states can choose to make the application specific to the Afterschool Meals Program where it's appropriate, have training specific to the Afterschool Meals Program. But sometimes this new component gets lost in the bigger umbrella of CACFP administratively.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: I have a question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Senator Greenstein.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Thank you.

I did want to ask-- Just to make sure I understand, both of you are really talking about the same program, correct? This is a chart about how it works in New Jersey.

MS. KILROY: Yes.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: And I just want to make sure I understand the map, because the example you use is from my district -- Mercer, Hamilton, New Jersey. You list a bunch of these schools -- all elementary schools.

By the way, is this only used in elementary school?

MS. KILROY: No.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: It is not. So what does this list of schools represent? These are schools that are doing the program right now?

MS. KILROY: No, those are schools that are eligible for-- Those elementary schools have at least 50 percent of students eligible for a free or reduced price lunch under the school lunch program. And that's how you determine eligibility for the At-Risk Meals Program.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: So can I assume that this is the complete list in Hamilton Township of schools that would be eligible for it?

MS. KILROY: Yes, that map is using 2011-2012 data from NJDOE. It's possible in the past year that those numbers would have changed. I've looked at '10-'11, '11-'12, and there has been an upward trend. There are more schools that are qualifying for the program, so it's possible that a few might be eligible. The school district would have that information.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Okay. And is this strictly paid for by Federal money or is there State money involved?

MS. KILROY: It's passed through-- After-school programs are reimbursed with USDA funds. It's a pass-through.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: So it, essentially, does not cost the State any money.

Do we know, for example, if any of these schools on this list from Mercer have joined in? Do we know that?

MS. KILROY: There are no programs operating in Hamilton. I know that.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: There are no programs there.

MS. KILROY: None in Hamilton.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Do we have a list of where they're located -- all the schools that are participating at the moment?

MS. KILROY: The State agency can provide that. It's not published.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: The State agency -- what is it called?

MS. KILROY: The Department of Agriculture.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Oh, okay. Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Just one quick question. What's not published?

MS. KILROY: Currently, the schools -- the after-school programs that participate in the program are not published. I would assume it's public data, but it's not on a website that you could just pull up.

SENATOR RICE: Well, it should be.

Melanie.

MS. SCHULZ: I'm writing. (laughter)

MS. KILROY: It's very helpful for advocates.

SENATOR RICE: We need legislation. I don't know why it's a secret.

MS. SIMS: I have that information, but I requested it.

SENATOR RICE: We'll do legislation to mandate it has to be public, and then we'll suggest that to the Education Committee or whoever will have that.

MS. SIMS: Can I just add something about the eligibility? It's not that-- I mean those schools, physically, are eligible. But it also means that any after-school program at any type of site -- a church, a nonprofit -- would then also be eligible based on the elementary, middle, or high school. And sometimes the situation is the nearby high school might not necessarily qualify for the program, but the nearby elementary school will. So it can be any of those schools.

MS. KILROY: And for instance, in Rahway, in Union County, the high school is not eligible, but the middle school is. And all students in Rahway attend the same middle school. So effectively, then, any after-school program operating in Rahway would be eligible because the middle school is eligible, and it covers the entire town.

MS. SIMS: And actually, as opposed to how the school meal programs work, for after-school meals -- if a kid is attending that program, and the program is area eligible, any child can eat the meal for free.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just need a-- I'm trying to think of this process. So if I live in a city that has, let's say, 20 different after-school programs -- and that's small in number. Do they come together to apply for this so that it can be distributed or done at this site, this site, this site, this site?

MS. SIMS: That is how it's usually most effective. Like she was saying, it's very difficult for the smaller programs. What tends to happen is, a United Way, a food bank will, if they can figure out who is running an after-school program in the community -- we call them *umbrella sponsors*. So they will take over several sites. And some states have umbrella sponsors that have 200 sites under their sponsorship.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: I have a question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Do you know if the standards for the after-school meals-- Are they similar to the standards for the breakfast?

MS. SIMS: So this past year -- I'm sure everyone's been hearing that the school lunch and school breakfast standards did change for the first time in 20 years. CACFP meal changes is on its way. It was kind of in line with after-school lunch. So it will be changing actually in the next year, we think.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: I guess what I'm asking is: Would we tend to have the same standards to qualify? If you saw a school that was on the Afterschool Program, it's likely that school would also be on the free breakfast list?

MS. SIMS: Yes.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Okay. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

Could you give me some examples of the umbrella sponsors?

MS. KILROY: In New Jersey, the Community Food Bank of New Jersey -- what they do-- It's actually a really neat program. They have a Workforce Development program where they have folks who didn't attend college and maybe didn't graduate high school in a culinary arts training program. And so they'll take food that they procured through the Food Bank's channels. And students enrolled in the culinary arts program will prepare the meals, and then they drop them off at these after-school programs that they sponsor. And they sponsor probably 15 programs in

North and Central Jersey, so the after-school program doesn't have to-- All they have to do at the site is take attendance every day and do a meal count. But the Food Bank of New Jersey is what -- the Community Food Bank of New Jersey attends the training, fills in the applications, and handle all the money so the after-school programs just have to accept the food and then serve it.

MS. SIMS: And in your packets, the Family League of Baltimore is an example. They have, I think, close to 200 sites that they sponsor. It's a huge operation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Well, I thank you very much for coming. You've given us a lot to think about. Thank you very much. I can see everybody's head here -- the wheels are turning.

MS. KILROY: Thank you.

MS. SIMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Next we have Irene Sterling, Executive Director of the Paterson Education Fund, Paterson Reads.

They're making a lot of news now.

I R E N E S T E R L I N G: Thank you for letting me talk with you today.

I'm here to talk about what's actually a national initiative, called the *Grade Level Reading Campaign*, which is looking to get all children in this country reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

A coalition headed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation put out a call last year for communities to put together plans to do this very special task. And 160 of us responded, four of them in New Jersey. So Paterson is

joined by Camden, Carteret, and Newark in working on this grade level reading campaign. It has three components of it: improving early learning, improving attendance, and increasing early learning -- part of your concern today around early childhood.

In Paterson, we've put together a community coalition of about 25 agencies, centered with our public library that is working both with the early childhood community to increase literacy opportunities for them, as well as utilizing our National Summer Reading Program to work with agencies to make sure that literacy is a part of all the programming that's going on across the city. Whether it's primarily recreational or primarily educational, there is a literacy component to it.

We've been funded by foundations into our not-for-profit organizations, and we've got a nice collaboration going on now both at the level -- the community level in terms of the agencies involved, and also the foundation community coming to support. We'd also like to put in a plug here. I will put my library trustee hat on and say that the New Jersey Library Association is also looking for some additional support from the Legislature to increase its per capita funding. And we'd like to use that funding directly toward youth programming. And in Paterson that would be directly to support the expansion of Paterson Reads here in town.

We're very excited about what is happening. We're about seven months into the implementation this year. We have a fabulous summer program that reached an additional 1,200 kids over the library-sited program by taking the program out into the agencies. And we look to expand that this summer to reach an additional 2,000 kids.

We're very excited about what community partnerships can do to enhance what government programming and other kind of programming can do. And so I'm here to encourage you to explore the expansion of these kinds of programs, not so much financially -- although financial is always helpful -- but also in putting the whole notion of collaboration more on the table as communities look to do this work.

I'd like to stop there and take any questions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just know that I've been reading about Paterson Library every day in the newspaper -- with your collection of books. It's really nice to see all the other communities and organizations contributing the books. And I think that's just great getting that word out there.

You're talking about -- to put your other hat on -- the extended learning opportunities. That's where I see you're going with the library. Just putting on your librarian hat, what is it that each and every year you face when it comes time -- with the budget?

MS. STERLING: Budgets are being reduced in places like Paterson. We are losing community wealth as there are -- more lose homeownership to foreclosure. And all of our funding is based on what the community wealth is. So we are continually losing ground with regard to how much money we have to go out and do the programming that needs to happen in our community.

Libraries are a central place for people to come and get free services. So whether we're talking about serving kids with books, and reading, and supporting the learning program; whether we're providing tutoring, which we are; whether we're providing job training by helping

people learn how to use computers -- and we have a tremendous expansion, through the Gates money, of computerization in our libraries. We are serving in multiple ways that people don't normally think about a library to help people be life-long learners, from very young children through senior citizens.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Good morning, Irene.

MS. STERLING: Good morning. How are you?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Could you elaborate a little bit more about the pipeline from home daycare to pre-K?

MS. STERLING: Sure. One of the things we've looked at in presenting the number of preschool kids-- One of the things we have to say is 70 percent, according to the State, of Paterson eligible preschool children -- 3 and 4 year olds -- get pre-K. But when we get to the Kindergarten class, we're really only seeing about 50 percent of those kids having had pre-K experiences. So between pre-K and Kindergarten, we have a break in the pipeline. Some of those children who are getting pre-K are not ending up in our Kindergartens for a variety of reasons, which we don't entirely know, which is one of the reasons we're doing this conference.

The other piece of this is pre-K has more requirements set on it that limit services. Parents, as you heard earlier in the Woodbine situation, are opting that, rather than using pre-K experiences that don't give them all the time they need because they work, are taking those kids out of a formal program and putting them in home daycare or even just informal babysitters. Those folks are not aligned with any kind of curriculum or other family supports to get kids ready to go into Kindergarten the way the preschool does.

So the question we're asking right now in Paterson is: How do we work together to improve (a) the number of kids who get into preschool; (b) the link between homecare providers and preschool so that homecare families -- providers are doing the kinds of things in their homes with kids that we want them to do to get them ready for preschool and Kindergarten? And then, how are we working with parents, at a very young age with very young children, to help them understand their role in getting kids ready to learn. It's one of the reasons we're focusing a lot of attention on expanding Reach Out and Read in Paterson. Reach Out and Read is a national program. It's got a strong statewide component. And what it does is engage pediatric services in working with the pediatricians on helping parents focus on the developmental milestones between birth and 5 years old that are necessary for kids to learn to read. In addition, pediatricians, in addition to talking with parents, give kids a book at every Well Baby or Well Child visit. And it's really instructive. If you hand a 3-year-old a book upside down, and they don't know to turn it the right side up or know that you open pages like this-- Having done that, the pediatrician can then talk to the parents about what they're doing at home and the kinds of things that would be helpful so that that child is ready to go on.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: For the members here, and for those of you there, the funding piece for after-school programs -- whether we're feeding, whether we're educating, whether we're providing tutorials and recreation -- is consistently being cut. And I just don't understand how local governments, county government, and State can't have a consistent piece of money that continuously goes out to fund those things, so there is always a

floor even though there may not be a ceiling. That always bothers me when you look at a city like Newark. Just the city itself has close to -- Board of Education -- about \$2 billion -- close to -- the budget. The State, regardless of how poorly our budget it -- to carve out money for these children for the kinds of programs we're talking about; and it's not even significant to the budget.

But there is a piece of legislation I'm trying to move, because I can see a need to at least do something that's more permanent where nonprofits can compete. And what it is, is that-- I'm trying to move legislation that would take -- I believe it's 1 percent of the lottery winnings in the state. I don't want to take the State money, because then I have to go fight the Governor. I don't mind fighting him, but sometimes I don't want to hurt him either in the fight. So the reality is that I know if I was to get -- I don't know -- \$1,000 in lottery, and you take 1 percent, I'm not going to cry too much because I had zero before I hit it. (laughter)

But across the board I think we're talking someplace in the area of \$10 million or more. I mean, having those dollars going back into the community I think is worthwhile. And maybe if they encouraged some corporate people to do some matching grants-- And so we're going to have to be more innovative.

Then when it comes to the kinds of things -- and we talk about parity and the support system-- I don't know how many years some of us in the Legislature have been trying to get it out of Committee. And I can't understand it because the Democrats control the committees now. So even if the Republicans don't vote for it, it becomes a partisan thing -- the Governor doesn't sign it -- we should be able to get a meaningful bill out of

our Committee on the Senate side. I think that the Assembly is doing a lot better job under Speaker Oliver in her leadership in moving legislation that's important, regardless of what happens. But for years we've been trying to work with the education system to require the DCA to provide the Internet resources for homeowners and people like that. Because you're talking about opportunities and reading programs, regardless of age. And yet parents in some of these locations, because the house is not set up for the things we're doing with technology now, can't access information to even do the support. And so we have these kinds of little things that bother me. And that's why I spoke earlier about the rhetoric about elected officials.

Now, I speak about it because I tell them to their face when I see them. So that's the difference. But it's something we need to look at in terms of this Committee -- how do we encourage, at least on the Senate side -- I don't think it's a hard sell for the Speaker, because she gets it -- the Senate President to start getting some of this stuff out of Committee -- the Budget Committee. That's really problematic. And the Education Committee -- a lot of things on my side are problematic, and I think I know why. We need to break through it.

But I just need you, because you've been doing such a great job with the coalition up in Paterson-- I think that your coalitions need to start to really look at what we're putting into the Legislature and start to get bills, and start to talk to us and work with us. Because we're going to have to mobilize. See, I'm not so into the Republican-Democratic thing that I'm not willing to mobilize against a Democrat. I'm not so into the presidency

of the Senate -- I'm not beholden to him or anyone else -- whoever the President may be -- that I'm not willing to challenge them.

And so we're working for people. And we have to get accountability from this Committee as to where these dollars are going, at least under the court-ordered mandated. But we also have a responsibility to identify the needs of these districts to make sure that the priority of the court spending is correct -- as to the mandate -- and that we're moving forward.

And so from that perspective-- As I said, we can't move legislation, but we can talk to our colleagues and report to them, and we can actually do legislation to go into the various committee.

Think about that. There are two things we need to be looking at from an education perspective. And that is: How do we find more money that -- a source of money that hopefully becomes -- maybe debatable in the public, but not so debatable legislatively -- that can enhance these programs, that's a permanent source of money even though it may be competitive; and then how do we make sure that we start to assist those homeowners who happen to own homes with providing the kinds of capability they need to do Internet kind of connection stuff.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Irene, I just want to say that I really commend the Paterson Library staff because I've been reading what you're doing, and I'm trying to get some of the people near where I live to say, "I know you're doing a good job, but look at what they're doing."

And I'm going to say Diane Genco, I know you're sitting out there from NJSACC--

And I have to tell you that she's helped to educate me as to what we could do with our summer learning and after-school programs. And I know that even in the area that I live -- I'm trying to say to people, "Well, wait a minute. The library has to connect with recreation, has to connect with the school, has to connect with the Board of Health. Can we sit down and have a meaningful summer fun learning experience?" We can do this. And it's very hard to break down the barriers, because -- "This is my turf, this is your turf. And if I go to rec I have to kick a ball." "Well, I think you can kick a ball and you can read."

MS. STERLING: Assemblyman Wimberly thinks so.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Right. And he's a champion of this. And I know this.

And this kind of attitude is what has to get out there. We can do this differently. And I see the libraries each year -- I know what it's like locally -- and they face the cuts each year. And if we are really talking about extended learning and getting to our young people, this the is way that we can do it.

I know that there are parents who are working. And all they're looking for is somebody in the summer -- "You go take care of them. I will pay you." They are struggling. But if it was meaningful, and it was fun-- And if we all came together we could do a better job so that they're not going backward.

And I just commend Paterson for doing the right thing. You do have your people who know that you're doing the right thing.

Thank you.

MS. STERLING: Thank you very much. It's our pleasure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Now, last but not least -- and we have a whole group coming up -- is Dr. Arlene Martin, the Executive Direction of Professional IMPACT New Jersey--

Arlene and your crew.

A R L E N E R. M A R T I N, Ed.D.: Thank you.

We appreciate the time. We'll try to be brief.

Good afternoon, as it is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Good afternoon.

DR. MARTIN: I'm Arlene Martin. I'm Executive Director of Professional IMPACT New Jersey. It is a DFD-funded project that was initiated to create the early childhood infrastructure for professional development 15 years ago.

I'd like to present-- We're going to be talking about quality and data, and how that really impacts our system. And it was really good to hear about the -- the initial presentations, because we really come right behind those about quality. If we don't have a quality workforce, we will not have quality programs.

So I would like to present Dr. Sharon Ryan first, who will speak about the workforce.

S H A R O N R Y A N, Ed.D.: Hi. Thanks for everyone's patience.

So let me tell you a little bit about our workforce. As Arlene -- as Cynthia Rice eloquently stated this morning, high quality early childhood programs can have short- or long-term impacts on children's social, emotional, and academic development. And, of course, they have economic benefits for us socially as a community and a society, both at the State and national levels. Other countries have figured this out a lot earlier

than us in America. But nonetheless, we're on track now. And the key to making sure we get those kinds of quality programs is a high-quality workforce. The challenge is that our workforce is not at the level of education and expertise that we know contributes to high-quality educational outcomes for young children.

So just to give you a little bit about our workforce-- There are three components of our workforce. The first are our early childhood caregivers, or direct care providers. These are primarily women, women who are typically around 38 to 39 years of age, also struggling to balance family and their job demands. Their education ranges depending on which sector they work in -- whether it's Head Start, child care, after-school care, public pre-K, or K-3 settings -- very significantly depending on State and Federal regulations. So they range anywhere from a high school diploma and a criminal background check, to a higher education degree of some kind. Many of our women, depending on the sector they work in, are from low-income communities themselves, and struggle to make ends meet because their wages are less than you get pumping gas in this state. Turnover, not surprisingly, in many sectors -- particularly the child care field -- depending on how subsidized it is, is around about 30 percent. And that has not changed since the National Child Care Staffing Study done in 1989. And the demographics of our workforce also changes by sector. So our direct care providers, whether they be teachers, lead teachers, teaching assistants, family care workers, Kindergarten teachers, vary depending on where they work. So if you work in a public school setting, or a publicly funded setting with higher regulations, you tend to have more Caucasian educators. The less credentials and degrees the more typically you have

women and teachers working from around your African-American, Hispanic and, less so, Asians background. We also know that our demographics in the workforce vary by job role. So many of our teaching assistants in a range of sectors are the ones who are the direct link to the communities in which our early childhood settings are located.

But the early childhood workforce is not just those who provide direct care to children, it's also program and school leaders. So we have child care directors, we have executive directors of (indiscernible) service organizations. We have principals, we now have superintendents, we have coaches because we now have publicly funded preschool in some districts.

At the same time there are also all these people who have a responsibility not so much for the direct care of children -- whether it be leading a program or teaching in a program -- but who have a direct role in terms of supporting people to do better in their work for young children and their families. We call these *infrastructure* people. They're people like me -- teacher educators, professional development providers, people who lead resource and referral agencies, curriculum coaches, mentors, a range of teacher leadership roles. These people have important roles to play, but often we don't know much about them.

So the workforce is certainly more than our teachers. But most Federal and State initiatives are trying to improve the early childhood workforce with regard to direct caregivers. So we have, for example, the Head Start Act of 2007. Many Head Start grantees are going through some difficult challenges at the moment because by 2013, 50 percent of teachers in Head Start programs -- of lead teachers are supposed to have a bachelor's degree.

In terms of our own -- various initiatives at the State level, we know that we can't get -- we have not been as successful in getting certain kinds of grants because we don't have certain kinds of workforce initiatives in place. Across most sectors people are trying to improve the qualifications of direct caregivers, but they're doing that often without -- with limited data about how to -- about how the workforce is continuing to move toward higher levels of education and experience.

At the same time, we have very little to almost no data on who our early childhood leaders are. We have some data sets, because we have, in the public school sector, around principals and superintendents; but we don't know very much about who those people are in terms of their early childhood expertise. We have next to very little knowledge in terms of our child care workforce. We know more about our public preschool teaching leaders than we do about other sectors in the early childhood workforce. And we know next to nothing about the qualifications and expertise of some of our people, like myself, in higher education in terms of how the workforce has to change in relation -- in the kinds of content and training they need, and the expertise we need in infrastructure personnel to support people to be as highly qualified and knowledgeable as they need to be for the changing demographic circumstances and knowledgeable society in which we live currently.

So we're kind of in this interesting challenge. At the same time, at the State level, we now have the New Jersey Council for Young Children, and we have what's very hard -- on that Council to think about how to improve the workforce. And we've been involved in several data-gathering initiatives that have built on other data-gathering initiatives that have been

done at the State level. But we really haven't had any kind of representative data set to really help us about how to plan and improve the development of the early childhood workforce as we move toward expanding pre-K, and improving the quality of programs through things like our quality writing improvement system and other quality initiatives.

Our most recent study was the economic impact study conducted in 2006. There have been some State studies conducted earlier than that on the public pre-K teaching workforce, and a little bit on some of those leadership positions in public pre-K. And more recently, the New Jersey Council for Young Children has met -- tried to map what we have in terms of professional development and preparation systems, particularly for leaders, infrastructure personnel, and teachers, to sort of see where we have gaps in our current system and where we need to be moving toward.

So we know that there-- It's well-documented that a high quality workforce is like the central linchpin to having quality programs. You can mandate child-staff ratios, you can mandate class size. But without high-quality teachers who know how to engage in highly responsive teaching interactions, using linguistically rich opportunities to build on children's conceptual understanding, and to provide that kind of responsive and emotional and social support -- plus be able to work with families who are culturally diverse -- we need talented, educated professionals. We know that that has economic benefits for our State. But our current challenge is, we really have no one data system to help us -- sort of guide our way toward building, sustaining, identifying gaps in our system to make sure that we continue to build a highly qualified workforce and one that recognizes who our workforce is. It's one thing to take someone like some of my preservice

teachers who are 22 and gung-ho. It's a whole other thing to work with people who are doing some great work in the field but may need -- may not have been back to school as nontraditional learners for some time. Now, we've managed to do this with our public pre-K program in our targeted districts, but we really have no means currently to really make sure our professional development system is working as effectively as it could. Hence we need-- What we're urging is a mandated workforce Registry which the Professional IMPACT New Jersey people have been involved in.

DR. MARTIN: Thank you, Sharon.

I'd like to introduce Ana Berdecia, who is a Senior Policy Fellow and Director of the John Watson Institute at Thomas Edison State College.

Ana.

A N A I. B E R D E C I A: I just want to echo Sharon's comments, because I'm also a teacher-educator and I work specifically at Thomas Edison around supporting nontraditional -- people who are not on a higher education track. The family child care provider, who is an entrepreneur working in her home, still needs the same supports and training that a teacher at a two-year community college and four-year college-- And so this professional development system would help us identify not only who is in the field of cross sectors, but what are their training needs. And how do we get them credentialed? How do we help them prepare to serve children and families?

I'll just hand it back over to Arlene on that note.

DR. MARTIN: So what are we asking here? We're asking you to help us support a policy that would require -- ask of the commissioners --

a requirement that the whole early childhood workforce be in our data system. Because as Sharon said, it's critical to understanding how to make informed decisions.

I'll tell you a little bit about our system. We were funded 15 years ago, as I said, by DFD, the Division of Family Development, through the Department of Human Services, to create the elements of an infrastructure for early childhood professional development. So PINJ, Professional IMPACT, has a career lattice, has career pathways, has core knowledge and standards, competencies for the field -- the profession. We create and promote ongoing professional development opportunities for the whole workforce -- those who are funded pre-K teachers, those who are Head Start teachers, those who are assistant teachers in child care settings, family child care workers, Diane's NJSACC group of people. We don't discriminate. We want everyone to be high quality.

So the greatest thing we have right now to support what the Federal government is requiring is our data system. And that is what we want utilized, since the Division of Family Development, over 10 years, has put a great deal of money into that to support the workforce. Now, we have a very small data set in that workforce because there is no requirement for people to be in it. There is also no cost to be in it, so it's not a hardship. But there is no required policy to have that happen.

So my colleague and staff person Mary Manning-Falzarano, who manages our data registry system, is going to share a little bit about that.

MARY MANNING - FALZARANO: Thank you, Arlene.

I will just give you an overview of the New Jersey Registry.

The New Jersey Registry was established in 2003 and upgraded in 2011. It's a state-of-the-art early care and education workforce management system, funded, as Arlene said, by the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development.

It's a customized tool customized to the needs of New Jersey to collect and maintain data needed for workforce management. So that includes -- we collect information about the participants. And that doesn't just include the teachers and teacher assistants working directly with the children. We can collect data about all of the early childhood workforce -- the infrastructure personnel and the leaders.

We also collect information about the early childhood programs or employers in the state. And, again, it doesn't just include child care centers. It can include the higher education institutions, the resource and referral agencies, the social service agencies, anyone who touches -- any agency that touches early childhood. We collect information about instructors in New Jersey -- the professional development providers -- not just higher ed, but also those offering noncredit training. And then we can collect other data related to quality initiatives in New Jersey, including the QRIS -- Quality Rating Improvement System -- that's about to be piloted.

The New Jersey Registry, as far as the individual in the Registry goes, brings recognition and professionalism into the field. The Registry does place the individual on a level on our career lattice from 1 to 10 based on their education in the field and experience. It also reflects professionalism, commitment to professionalism by the individual's willingness to be on the New Jersey Registry career lattice. And the individuals do have to do 20 hours of professional development per year in

order to renew every year. So it reflects that commitment to advance professional development. And the data coming out of the Registry can inform policy makers such as yourselves about the early childhood and school age workforce.

The next slide just kind of puts it all together. On Slide 12 it puts all the elements together. It combines the practitioner and program data. The practitioner data is collected through all of those elements on the left -- self-reported information. We do verify education through transcripts or copies of workshop certificates so they can't just write it down and say, "Yes, I have it." We actually verify it. Employment data: We have the capacity to verify current employment with the person's supervisor. And then other sources. And then as far as the program data -- again, self-reported information. We use licensing information from the Office of Licensing, assessment data and, again, other sources.

And then the outputs that can result from that include reporting on the workforce, consumer information. We could build a module that's available to the public with the information that they might need to know especially related to QRIS. It can affect teachers' professional development plans in knowing what professional development they're lacking and what they should do in order to advance in level; public policy planning; and then quality improvement initiatives.

The next slide is just one example of data that comes out of the New Jersey Registry. As you can see, our population is small -- our population of active participants is small. It's about 1,000, 1,100 individuals. By mandating participation, that would, of course, get that number up. But this does give you an indication of what the Registry data

can tell us. As you can see, the largest number of individuals' background isn't strictly professional development -- noncredit training. And then it goes on from there. Some individuals have a CDA or CCP, and then we have some college, and then the associate's level on up. So you can see how this information would be useful in identifying who the workforce is and what kind of education and training they need to pursue.

Just in sitting and listening this morning, I identified some data needs that could be answered through the Registry. Sharon pointed out that community-based teachers and teacher assistants don't have the same requirements the Department of Ed teachers and teacher assistants have. The Department of Ed requires a bachelor's degree with teacher certification. Teachers in community-based settings, as Sharon pointed out, can range anywhere from a high school GED all the way up to a master's or Ph.D. level. So it runs the whole gambit. It would be great to get a picture of where most of our teachers are and what they need to do in order to advance in level.

In relation to Paterson-- The speaker before us was speaking about the family child care providers in Paterson. It would be great to get a picture of the family child care providers in Paterson by putting them in the Registry -- what their backgrounds are. If they've had exposure to the kinds of curriculum that they need to work with the children, we could track that right in the Registry, identify the training that was needed and be able to tell exactly who had the training.

And then, ultimately, it would be nice to be able to tie that to child outcomes -- tie the teacher and program data to child data so we

would know if the children were making advancements based on the training that the teachers were receiving.

So that's just--

Oh, one more thing. The New Jersey Registry is a member of the National Registry Alliance, which is a national organization of registries around the country -- both state and regional registries. And we did achieve their partnership eligibility review, which is an accreditation type of process for registries. We achieved that in 2011 in meeting standards, in collecting data, and reporting data.

DR. MARTIN: So we have this tool. And we would like to see it utilized, because so much effort, and time, and funding has gone into it. It has the capacity to do what we need to report data to our State sectors and to our Federal government on the needs of the early childhood workforce, the quality issues that we face, and how we can benefit them.

Thank you so much.

SENATOR RICE: Let's talk about this Registry a little bit.

I understand what you're saying. But my question to you is: Why are people, entities, not voluntarily signing up for the Registry?

DR. MARTIN: Voluntarily signing up? They don't know they have to.

SENATOR RICE: They don't have to.

DR. MARTIN: They don't have to. No, they don't have to. The only sector that has to right now are funded programs funded through the Division of Family Development. They are required to--

SENATOR RICE: Let me tell you why I raise that.

DR. MARTIN: Sure.

SENATOR RICE: They may know about it. Let's go back to the genesis of what we did in the State with early childhood participation. I can tell you there were people who, for years, have been about providing early childhood education who know more about the community and the kids than the folks with the credentials. But we took this shift toward the Head Start type model and we said that, "You have to have certain levels of credentials to work in these daycare facilities and preschools." And that was fine. I amended some of the legislation. They said, "You have to have it by this date." And I said, "No, you're not going to tell Mrs. Smith, who is 60 years old, 65 years old, whatever, and spent 30 years in that facility, graduating and working with these kids, that she doesn't have more knowledge than some person who comes in with all these academic credentials and certifications." And there was this big push to push pretty much all the people -- particularly in the urban cities -- out of their jobs rather than trying to transition. So I had to move legislation and fight them to make it more reasonable. Because it made sense to have not babysitters but people with the skill sets to do the cognitive skills. I said, "Hold it. You're not going to lose your job. And, no, you don't have this window. You have this window. You get it when you can." That's different than someone new coming into the system that we can prepare before they even start coming into that system.

And so my feeling is that you've got data. And a lot of us -- we think and know that data is very important and very powerful. But we also know that data, in the hands of the wrong people, is very detrimental to us because this government would take the data. Then the greed-- Money people or special interests think everybody should have a Ph.D., don't take

into consideration the experience, particularly of urban dwellers, and our relationships to kids and what we go through. And they'll come in and say, "We want legislation to demand that now you have a Ph.D.," when we decided those who have a master's. And we have more experience."

So we need to take a look at what-- See, I don't have a problem mandating you have to register. My greatest concern is what happens to people once it occurs? Depending on who is in office -- but what happens? Because I've seen this. I've been here 27 years. I've watched it. I've watched people come in and say, "We want continued education," which doesn't make any sense to me. We change the rules, that's one thing; but to get the same thing over, and over, and over again, and some of these licenses -- just money grab.

But I watch people come in and say to us, "I think to be a nurse you should have a bachelor's degree." Well, most nurses do strive for bachelor's degrees. But the nurses in the community colleges take the same tests as the four-year colleges and do better than most of them. But I see a push for special interests -- under the auspices -- is based on need and enhancing. And I just don't want that to happen. I want to see-- I want that data though. I want that, because that's important to us. But I don't want it to be where all of a sudden the State, because they're funding something, say, "We've got this data. Now I'm going to go in there, and we're going to tell Ron Rice you have about three more months here, and you're out of here." "Where do I go from here? Number one, there's my age. Number two, my love of the business. I think I'm brighter than the person you want to send me with the credentials. But I pay a mortgage like

everybody else. And there's never been a problem here with these kids as long as I've been here." Do you understand what I'm saying?

DR. MARTIN: Absolutely.

SENATOR RICE: So we have to take a look at this before we start to legislate the mandate -- is figure out how to protect-- How do you use data to benefit folks, not use data to mandate, unreasonably, things on people?

DR. RYAN: Can I just say that I certainly understand your concerns. And when some of those mandates have come down for people to improve their qualifications without consideration of time or who those people are in their history within the community and the site, it has been difficult. I think Head Start grantees are going through this right now with some of their people.

However, the Registry, by mandating it, is more about tracking, supporting, and encouraging people, and helping us to plan to say, "By the year 2018, 20 percent of our lead teachers in these kinds of sectors are going to have--" It's to help us sort of try and keep improving our workforce.

I think in terms-- Also we have to be very mindful of the fact that we're seeing a shift from simply -- and I don't mean *simply*, because if you've ever worked with young children like I have -- and I do once a week currently -- it's exhausting, it's hard work, and there is a great deal of responsibility placed on you. Any teacher knows that. But we know that children who are not in high-quality settings where they're working with people who can give them the kinds of interaction and language they need to start building their understandings of their world, in the right kinds of

environments that enable them to take risks but in ways that are safe, and to be able to learn how to problem solve-- Those kids are not the ones who go on and succeed. And we do know that by maintaining lower levels of education in our workforce, those children with -- not all-- But we do know that there is a direct link between the kinds of language interactions that take place in early care in education settings and children's ongoing academic success. We know that maternal education has an impact on children's learning.

SENATOR RICE: Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt.

I get that, but I don't want you to miss my point. The idea is, to get to where you're going with this, we'll need more people on the Registry.

DR. RYAN: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: And my concern is that they are there -- then government -- some actors, some special interests take advantage of that to abuse it to cause them harm.

Now, if we're going to talk about mandating the register -- which I have a problem with -- and we're doing legislation that says, "Heretofore you need to have these kinds of things--" That's not what we normally do. We normally come in and say, "Ron, you've been there 25 years, and you have three months to get a bachelor's degree." And I'm like, "Who is going to pay for it? I don't have time to go to school. I still have a family. And they're not paying me that much to be in the daycare environment." I mean, those kinds of things come up. We have to stop that, because you're talking about data to be used for -- mostly for the future -- the intermediate future and the long-term. That's fine. I just need

to say I will support mandating it just to make you feel better. But if you're going to be arguing this or promulgating this with the legislators in this state, you make sure you keep one word in mind, "heretofore." Do you understand what I'm saying? Because I get real leery, because the experiences in the communities and the district I represent -- it's a very diverse district -- is not the same as the experience that most of my colleagues have in the districts they represent. So it's easy for them to throw mandates or throw things out there to do pain to people who are already struggling, because where they come from people don't have the same struggles, or aren't struggling as much, or it's not as painful, or they have time for the transition, or it's easier to make the transition. Do you understand what I'm saying? So we have to be very careful about how we be objective in the approach. I agree with what you're saying. We need it, and I think we should be looking at how to make that mandate. Because it also goes back to what we're saying with early childhood education -- youngsters starting to grow up knowing now if you want to go and do these things, you need to do these things. Some of these -- some of our junior highs may decide, "I want to go there, so I better start paying attention to this." I don't have a problem with that, because it's kind of like an incentive. I just don't like people in systems being hurt, particularly those who've been there for a long period of time. That's like me coming in and mandating something on you, and you're going to think I'm crazy with all the knowledge you have. If I come and say, "You need three Ph.D.s." You're going to say, "For what? I've been here." Do you understand? Always put yourself in those people's positions.

DR. MARTIN: Right. So we don't know how this will look at this point, but we've been talking to other states because the Federal government is talking about every state having a registry. And I think there are 30 states that now have a registry. So we've talked to about 10 different states -- how they've handled this and what -- have they put it in code, have they written a policy that's coming through their regulatory system for governing the child care programs. And many are doing it that way -- their licensing bureaus -- putting it in a written policy and requiring their funded programs to be in it. Other places -- other states are doing it through their quality improvement system -- their QRIS -- that's attached to a registry.

So there are different ways that states are approaching this. And I understand exactly what you're arguing for. And I so agree with you that we want to be careful of how our data is used. And yet we do need the data.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just have a few questions. How are you currently funded? Just review that again for me.

DR. MARTIN: We're funded by the Division of Family Development in the Department of Human Services. We've been funded through them for 15 years. They hold the Registry. That is their ownership.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: And when you talk about the other states that have a registry -- 30 states--

DR. MARTIN: Connecticut, Nevada, Wisconsin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Is there anybody mandating it?

DR. MARTIN: Yes, that's what I just said.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: They're mandating it. Wow.

And I'm understanding what Senator Rice is saying, and I'm understanding what you are saying. Because somehow we have to elevate the qualifications of those who are teaching our very young. Because like I said, I didn't know with my granddaughter what methods worked, but I knew somebody else out there knew and had that expertise.

So when you have that Registry-- And let's say I'm a teacher. I have an associate's degree, and I put my name on this -- I go to do this. Is there a charge for me?

DR. MARTIN: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: There's no charge. What do I get for doing this?

MS. MANNING-FALZARANO: The Registry produces professional development and education records for the individual that they can print out any time they want, which delineates their education and all the trainings that they have taken. So that can be used to document their background for their current job, it could be taken on a job interview to demonstrate their education and training.

Our hope is that the Office of Licensing would be using it to document staff members' education and training rather than flipping through pages and pages of certificates. It could be used by directors for NAYC -- the National Association for the Education of Young Children --

accreditation. Our reports were approved by NAYC in the accreditation process, as well as the Family Child Care Accreditation System. There's a lot of potential too for the Registry, which we haven't had the funding to build additional modules to benefit the practitioner -- things like a resume builder where they could take all the information in the Registry and push a button, and it would generate their resume. They wouldn't have to spend hours working on that. Job boards -- we've had questions -- "Do you have a job board," where directors could advertise open positions, and people looking for jobs could look at what positions are available. So there's a lot of potential that's been untapped.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Are other states ahead of New Jersey in this potential or are they all just in the building stages?

MS. MANNING-FALZARANO: Some are. It's a whole gambit as to what the different states use the registry for. Some are very focused on the practitioner and benefits to the practitioner. Nevada, in particular, has the modules that I was just talking about. Others that are more focused on licensing or QRIS don't have as many features. So it runs the whole gambit.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I'm gathering from listening to the entire conversation that the whole industry of child care developed before we thought about how we were going to do it. (laughter) So now it's out there. And now we're trying to say-- We have to develop some standards now. And I think that's the problem that we're struggling with. "How do I get those standards in place."

When you talked about Head Start, and you said by 2013, 50 percent must have a B.A., how am I going to know that? Is somebody keeping track of that?

DR. MARTIN: It can be kept track of, but they're not in our system at this point, if that's what you mean. The data is not there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: So how do I know? If I put that as a goal, how do we know that I satisfied that goal?

DR. MARTIN: I imagine they have to do that internally for the Federal government.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I hope somebody is doing it. I guess that's what I'm saying.

DR. MARTIN: I would image. But we wouldn't know about it.

DR. RYAN: The joy of working in early education is that we are actually several different sectors that have been fragmented that are trying to come together to create a birth to 8 system. So Head Start has its own set of recording procedures and regulations, child care has its own set, family day care, infant-toddler care -- it varies by ages -- public pre-K, public schools. But we don't have a repository -- one repository for our state for everyone who works in the early childhood workforce.

At the same time -- just listening to the commentary earlier -- when we talk about improving the qualifications, we also can't forget we're talking about compensation, and how to improve the working conditions and the work environments of those within the early childhood workforce as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Do you have any data as to what the average salary of an early childcare worker is?

MS. MANNING-FALZARANO: We have the data on the people who are active in the Registry now. As I said, there are only a sample of 1,100 people. And the figures that we do have are, I think, elevated because the types of people in the Registry are either people who are in DFD-funded types of programs, pursuing accreditation, those kinds of things. So the staff tend to be higher educated anyway. Or we did a couple of pilots with school districts where the teachers have to have bachelor's degrees and that they have to pay those teachers comparable to what they pay their public school teachers. So I think the figures we have are elevated. But we do have them. We have the capability to get them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Anybody else?

SENATOR RICE: We should go to Nevada -- we should take the Committee to Nevada to look at the-- (laughter)

MS. SCHULZ: I agree. I've written that down. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I second that one.

Thank you.

Just quickly, all the questions were answered. I was curious about the Registry. Is there active recruitment for males or minorities to get involved in this profession?

DR. MARTIN: Yes, we're actively recruiting in every way possible right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Now, do you have a marketing plan?

DR. MARTIN: Yes, we do.

MS. MANNING-FALZARANO: We go out to centers. We'll actually go out to programs and work with the teachers, help the teachers enroll. We actually did a pilot with the Paterson School District and Red Bank -- two vastly different districts -- and Head Start. As Arlene said, we're very cross sector. We do try to hit everybody. We present at conferences. The conference season is coming up. We're booked just about every Friday for the next two months doing workshops and that kind of thing. So we do-- With a staff of three people, we really do quite a bit.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That's great. That answered my questions.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Have you spoken with anyone in the Department of Education? I mean, are they-- What is their feeling?

DR. MARTIN: How could we say this? The Council -- we're working very closely with Sharon and Ana, who are the co-chairs of the workforce committee of the Council; and with Ceil Zalkind, who sits on the Council; and the (indiscernible) committee, and the data committee on the Council. So, yes, we are all talking together about -- thinking about ways to help unify the system.

SENATOR RICE: I've known Ms. Zalkind for a number of years. She doesn't work for the Department of Education.

DR. MARTIN: No, no, I'm just saying she sits on the Council.

SENATOR RICE: I think the question was: Internally, with the Department of Education -- what are their feelings?

Is there anyone here from the Department of Education?

I think the people you talk about are not--

DR. MARTIN: But we work with the Council, which has oversight for putting all of this together.

SENATOR RICE: Who is on the Council?

DR. MARTIN: Dr. Wolock chairs the Council, Ceil Zalkind sits on -- she chairs the QRS committee.

SENATOR RICE: I mean, who from the Department of Education.

DR. MARTIN: Ellen Wolock.

SENATOR RICE: Who is she?

DR. RYAN: She's the Director of Early Childhood.

DR. MARTIN: She's from the Department of Education.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Have you spoken with the Commissioner?

DR. RYAN: There is a commission -- where the commissions come together around early childhood issues. And they've already spoken about the Registry. So it's not just the Commissioner of Education, but Commissioners from other agencies such as Labor.

And Ellen Wolock co-chairs the Council for Young Children with Laura Morana, who is Superintendent of Red Bank Public Schools. So the Council brings together people from across the early childhood system from a range of agencies, as well as representatives from different sorts of sectors.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I'm going to admit that I am totally new to this whole field. For me, I try to think about this -- and who licenses who. And it's beyond my comprehension why we have DHS

which licenses the program, and DOE which licenses the people. I'm thinking it's kids, it's education, and we're taking care of them. And when we talk about how complex things get -- I don't understand why I'm working with two different departments. But you probably have a history in that. I just don't get it. And I think if we simplified matters, we could cut down on a lot of things.

Once again, I do realize what we need to do. We need to elevate the workforce. If we want to have a higher-paid workforce, we have to make sure that they have the training. And I think we have to really sit down and work this out.

And I agree, as long as we're not going to hurt the people right now who have to finish out-- Going forward, you need to have this. And just as we set a date by 2013 for Head Start, there needs to be a date out there where I'm confident--

But the other thing is that when I pay people more -- this is the other side of me -- I'm going to pay people more because I feel it's important that we pay people for their professionalism. And it needs to happen for the early childhood student. And then I think about: "Okay, now I'm going to drive up the cost." And there is no-- It's like a vicious circle. But listen, I'd rather take the chance and elevate the pay of the people who are out there and their expertise. So I really applaud you on that. And we're going to work on that and work on that language with you.

DR. MARTIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you.

DR. MARTIN: Thanks for your time today. We appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: No, thank you.

We are adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX



Giving Every Child A Chance

To: Members, Joint Committee on the Public Schools
From: Cecilia Zalkind, Executive Director
Cynthia Rice, Senior Policy Analyst
Date: February 27, 2013
Re: **Preschool Expansion and School Breakfast**

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) urge the members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools to consider two important issues affecting children in our state: the need to expand high-quality preschool for 3- and 4- year-olds and the need for school breakfasts to be more accessible to students.

Preschool Expansion

ACNJ urges the Legislature to make good on a promise and begin funding expansion of high-quality, full-day preschool to 3- and 4- year-olds from low-income families, as mandated in our state school funding formula.

There are volumes of research and data demonstrating that high -quality preschool can have a dramatic effect on not only the children who participate, but on society as a whole. When children are prepared on their first day of kindergarten, they will experience early successes, and those successes will lead to more successes. When they are not prepared, however, their chances of realizing such successes are greatly diminished.

Research has also shown that quality and duration matter when young children attend programs outside the home. When a preschooler attends an early learning program that is both high-quality and full-day, the lasting effects on his/her development can be significant, particularly if that child is from a low-income family.

By providing children with quality programs that prepare them to be ready for school, we are taking steps to both close our persistent achievement gap and increase equity in our public schools. No new education reform initiative will ever be meaningful if children have not acquired the necessary skills to be successful on their first day of kindergarten and beyond.

This is a very timely topic, as preschool has turned into a national conversation in the last few weeks. This however, is not a new concept in our state. In New Jersey, we have long recognized the importance of preschool especially for low-income families. For nearly 20 years, the state has provided funding to support preschool and the school funding law mandates high-quality, full-day preschool to be fully funded by state dollars for all low-income children.

/x

While New Jersey has led the nation in providing high quality preschool to low-income children, thousands of children are still denied this early education because of where they live. It is time to make good on the promise of preschool.

To measure the need and the will to expand preschool to all eligible children, ACNJ surveyed the 100 districts that currently receive limited preschool state aid. The majority of these districts have high concentrations of children living in low-income families. These children would most benefit from full-day, high-quality preschool. Administrators in 46 of these districts completed the survey.

There were four key survey findings:

1. *The districts are ready and willing to expand their preschools so that more children can benefit.* Approximately 82% surveyed said they had a strong interest in expansion. When asked why they were interested in expanding their programs, nearly all the respondents said that expansion would better prepare their students for kindergarten. Moreover, 75% said that preschool would help children develop critical social and emotional skills at an earlier age.

2. *Parents want their children participating in preschool.* 85% of the respondents said that parent demand for preschool is very high. More than 41% of those surveyed stated that their district had a waiting list for 4-year-olds.

3. *The lack of funding is the barrier for providing preschool.* Overwhelmingly, the respondents indicated that what is missing is the additional support promised in the funding formula. They further stated that they cannot meet the needs of young children without adequate state funding. The responses stated that:

- About half are unable to serve all their 4-year-olds
- More than 41% have a waiting list for their 4- year-olds
- More than 68% provide only ½ day preschool for their 4- year olds
- Only 1/3 offer preschool to their 3- year olds

4. *Districts are committed to provide preschool.* Approximately 70% of the responses indicated that they were using local funds to supplement their state funds for preschool. However, with rising district costs, and the existing spending cap, local funds were inadequate to provide full access and quality to all eligible preschoolers.

Besides the survey, ACNJ also assessed whether full-day, high quality preschool was having a positive effect on children in the four districts, Fairfield, Little Egg Harbor, Red Bank and Woodbine, that have received state expansion funds since the funding formula became law. All four districts have high concentrations of low-income children.

ACNJ interviewed administrators in these districts and the overarching message was the same: *preschool was making a huge difference in the lives of their students.*

All four districts identified the following benefits for expanding preschool:

1. *Children are better prepared for kindergarten.* All four districts said that before preschool, most of their students were entering kindergarten without the necessary skills to be successful, particularly in language and reading. They all said that starting earlier—at 3 years-old is making a measurable difference in preparing children to be ready on their first day of school.
2. *Fewer children are requiring special education.* They also saw the link between preschool and a reduction in the number of children requiring special education. For example, before preschool was implemented in Little Egg Harbor the kindergarten referral rate for special education was approximately 11%. In 2011-12, the referral rate was less than 3%, clearly indicating that having the ability to address children's issues earlier, is not only benefiting students but is a cost-saving measure for districts. Similarly, Red Bank acknowledged that when they looked at their special education numbers, they now know they are identifying the right children and they are getting the services they need.
3. *Children's social and emotional skills are better developed.* The result of strengthening these critical skills at an earlier age has meant that all four districts are currently seeing fewer behavioral problems in their kindergarten classes. This was a much bigger kindergarten issue prior to the implementation of preschool.
4. *More opportunities for professional development have raised overall quality.* The support has also increased the opportunities for teachers to hone their skills in teaching young children. In Fairfield, these increased opportunities for professional development have allowed staff to think more broadly about early learning and have provided them with collaborative opportunities they did not have in the past.

While the research on the benefits of preschool remains indisputable, the information collected by ACNJ confirms that the benefits, the demand, and the need for preschool require New Jersey to keep its promise to young children. ACNJ urges the legislature to make a down-payment to expand access to preschool for low-income children.

Fortunately, there is already a base to build-upon. By supplementing existing state support for districts that already have half-day preschool, more children can reap the benefits enjoyed by those 3- and 4- year olds currently attending high quality, full-day PK.

By providing an additional \$10 million in preschool aid, the state can maximize its existing commitment to preschool in several different ways:

- Expand existing preschools from half- to full-day for nearly 1500 youngsters
- Provide full-day PK for nearly 800 children who currently do not attend h-q PK

- Provide preschool through a combination of these two options

In NJ, we have long recognized the importance of preschool especially for children from low-income families. We understand that dollars are tight. By investing in a strong educational foundation for young children, however, we are ensuring more proficient readers in 3rd grade and eventually more students leaving our schools with the skills necessary to compete in the 21st century.

Making this investment pays enormous dividends for children, families, communities and taxpayers. As budget discussions move forward, ACNJ urges you to view this down-payment as a critical investment in our children's education—one we can no longer afford to delay.

School Breakfast

Research shows that when students have eaten a good breakfast it is a "win-win" situation for both them and their schools. In general, students who have had breakfast perform better academically and have fewer visits to the school nurse. Schools experience less disruptive student behavior and increased attendance and reduced tardiness.

While nearly all school districts have a school breakfast program when they have 20% or more of their students eligible for free- and reduced-lunch, only 41% of those who are eligible actually take advantage of the breakfast, placing New Jersey a dismal 46th out of 51, according to the Food Research and Action Center's *2011-2012 School Breakfast Scorecard*.

The main barrier is that many schools only offer breakfast before school starts and thus not addressing the realities of family life. Bus and family schedules often prevent children from arriving at school with enough time to eat breakfast before that first school bell, leaving many with having nothing to eat before they begin their school day. With nearly one in three New Jersey children living in families that earn too little to meet their basic needs (2010 data), ensuring that every eligible child has access to breakfast is more important than ever.

For the past few years, ACNJ and its partners in the *NJ Food For Thought School Breakfast Campaign* have worked to ensure that more children are eating a healthy breakfast at school. The Campaign's goal is to boost participation in the federal School Breakfast Program by 30 percent by June 2013. If achieved, about 40,000 more children will get a healthy breakfast each school day.

The steering committee is working to build statewide support for school breakfast expansion, as well as assisting local efforts to expand school breakfast participation. Since the *Campaign* began, there has been good news, as the state saw a 21% increase in the number of children from low-income families receiving breakfast at school during the period between October 2010 and March 2012.

Although there remains plenty of work to be done, part of the reason for this increase is because schools are beginning to think differently on how best to have more students participating in their breakfast program. Districts are finding that serving “breakfast after the bell” is a more effective way of ensuring that children get a healthy meal at the start of every school day.

For example, providing breakfast in the classroom often dramatically increases student participation in the breakfast program. Typically, food services staff members pack meals into insulated containers for each classroom and deliver them before the first bell rings. Students come into their classroom, grab their meal and sit down and eat. Normally, this is the time that attendance is being taken, announcements are made and desk work is taking place. When the students have completed their breakfast, they dispose their trash for the custodial staff to remove.

Districts with high concentrations of eligible children are usually able to cover the full cost of providing breakfast to more students because of the increase of federal meal reimbursement rates and the relative stability of program operating costs.

In order to learn how well individual school districts are doing in providing school breakfasts, ACNJ urges the legislators to review the district participation data in the September 2012 *Food For Thought: Expanding School Breakfast to NJ Students*. If particular schools in legislators' legislative districts have high concentrations of eligible children and low participation rates, ACNJ urges legislators to contact these districts and advocate for increased participation.

AFTERSCHOOL MEALS IN NJ



Afterschool programs are a proven setting to improve children's academic, social, and emotional development. The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, provides financial support for the development of healthy eating habits and address hunger in children.

The CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program provides federal reimbursement to afterschool enrichment programs serving snack or supper to students in low-income communities.

To qualify for these funds, the food served must meet strict nutritional requirements and meal patterns. Studies show that students consuming healthy foods in school actually replace junk foods in their diet – leading to an overall reduction in fat, calories, and added sugars.

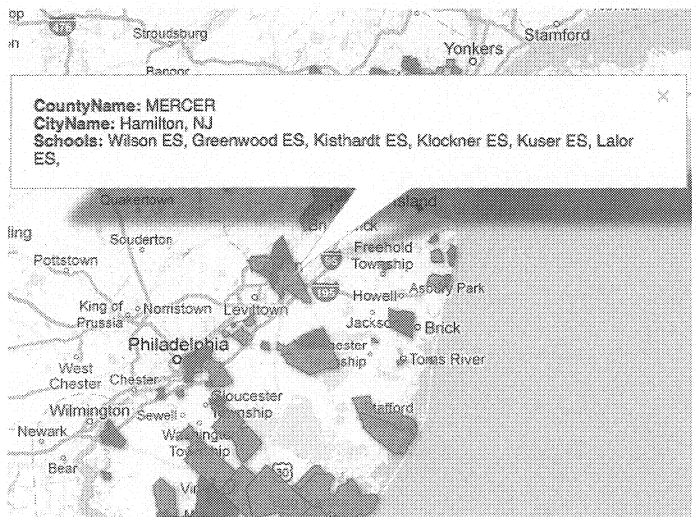
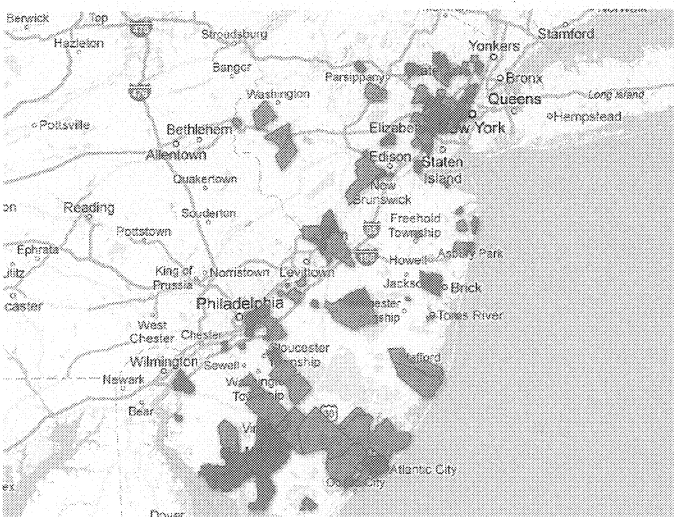
The At-Risk Meal Program addresses both hunger and nutrition issues facing NJ's youth.

- Nearly 1 in 3 youth aged 10-17 are overweight or obese.
- 17% of low-income children aged 2-5 are obese, the highest rate in the US
- Over 34% children age 2-5 in are overweight or obese across all income levels.
- 11.5% of households in NJ experience food hardship, meaning households have to choose between buying food or meeting other basic needs, such as medical expenses or rent.
- Over 50% of the children enrolled in afterschool programs in NJ qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

The At-Risk Meal Program provides participating afterschool programs with a reimbursement of \$0.78 per child per day for snacks and \$2.86 per child per day for meals. Eligibility is determined using the National School Lunch Program data from neighboring schools. All children attending an afterschool program in an eligible area claim the full rate of reimbursement.

The program is only in its second year in NJ, but growth has been slow. Only 7% of students in eligible communities receive supper through the program. Utilization has increased by a fraction of a percent this year. Statewide, suppers served through the At-Risk Meal Program currently bring in over \$13 million per year. If all programs in eligible communities enrolled and served suppers, this program could bring an additional \$175 million each year.

NJSACC's At-Risk Meal Program page has a number of resources on the program. Please visit our webpage for a program overview, handbook, profiles on successful programs, an eligibility map, and other resources to help afterschool programs get started. <http://www.njsacc.org/providers/atRisk-MealsProgram.php>



NJSACC: The Statewide Network for New Jersey's Afterschool Communities
231 North Avenue West, #363, Westfield, NJ 07090 | T: 908-789-0259 | F: 908-789-4237 | ekilroy@njsacc.org

FRAC

Food Research and Action Center

Joint Committee on the Public Schools

New Jersey State Legislature

Testimony on the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program

February 27, 2013

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Fact Sheet: The Afterschool Meal Program

Program Overview

- The Afterschool Meal Program offered through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides federal funding to afterschool programs operating in a low-income area to serve meals and snacks to children 18 and under after school, on weekends, and during school holidays. Extended-day schools that run for an additional hour or more also may be eligible. Youth who turn 19 during the school year remain eligible until the end of the school year.
- Local government agencies, school districts and private nonprofit organizations can sponsor afterschool meal sites, which may be located at schools, recreation centers, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other locations where afterschool programs are offered to children.
- In order to participate, an afterschool program must operate in a low-income area where 50 percent of the children in the local elementary, middle or high school qualify for free or reduced price meals; offer educational or enrichment activities; and meet state and local health and safety standards or when required, be licensed for child care.
- Children receiving meals and snacks from participating afterschool programs can be either drop-in or enrolled. Meal counts and corresponding attendance records must be maintained for each day of operation in order to be reimbursed for all meals and snacks served.
- Reimbursable meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards. The meal can be served at any point during the afterschool program. Even though the meal is often referred to as supper, programs that operate on weekends and school holidays can choose to serve breakfast or lunch instead. Programs can receive funding for a maximum of one meal and one snack per day.



CACFP Plays an Important Role in Communities

- When the school bell rings, millions of low-income children do not know where their next meal will come from. The breakfast and lunch they receive during the school day may be their only access to nutritious meals until the following day, after the weekend, or after a school holiday break.
- CACFP fills this gap by providing free meals and snacks to children who might otherwise go hungry.
- The Afterschool Meal Program is an exciting new opportunity to financially support local after school programs and attract more students to activities that help them learn and stay safe when school is out.

Afterschool Meals Benefit Low-Income Children and Families

- CACFP contributes to the healthy growth and development of low-income children by providing them with nutritious snacks and meals when school is out so they are better able to learn during the school day.
- Afterschool meal programs are required to offer educational or enrichment activities in addition to meals, which enables children to learn and stay safe when school is out. The meals served through CACFP draw

children to these activities.

- Afterschool meals help parents stretch their food dollars at home during the school year.

It Pays to Serve Afterschool Meals

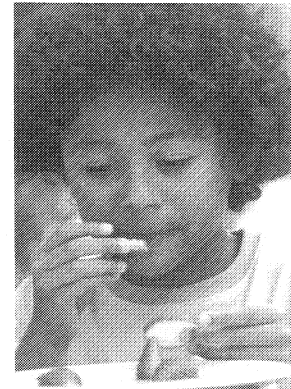
- Participating afterschool programs are reimbursed for each meal they serve, which means the funding increases as the program grows.
- For the 2012-2013 school year, CACFP sponsors receive \$1.55 for each breakfast served, \$2.86 per lunch or dinner served, and \$0.78 per snack. CACFP sponsors can additionally choose to receive the value of commodities (or cash in lieu of commodities), \$0.2275 for July 2012 through June 2013, for each lunch and dinner served, which would total about \$3.08 per lunch or dinner served.
- Afterschool nutrition funding can add up. For example, an afterschool program serving a meal to 50 children 180 school days a year would receive approximately \$25,740 in federal funding through the CACFP without the value of commodities and approximately \$27,720 with the value of commodities.
- Serving a snack in addition to the meal would generate an additional \$7,020 per year, which would total \$32,760 without the value of commodities and \$34,740 with the value of commodities.
- Programs that currently provide meals and snacks but have not received federal funding through CACFP can be reimbursed and use the money previously spent on food to serve additional children, offer more activities or hire additional staff.

USDA Guidance Makes the Program Easier to Operate

- States can create a simplified School Food Authority (SFA) application process for school districts that already participate in the School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, schools and sponsors whose meals are prepared by a school nutrition department can use "OVS" in the Afterschool Meal Program. OVS allows schools and sponsors receiving their meals from schools to offer all of the meal components, but students do not have to take all of the items. This can lower plate waste and food costs. OVS cannot be used for snacks.
- States can tailor their CACFP application and training specifically to the Afterschool Meal Program.
- Participating afterschool programs have some options to reduce paperwork, including not requiring a management plan if it is a single site program; tailoring the budgetary level of detail to the size and scope of the applicant; and not requiring production records.

Get Started

- Afterschool meals provide nutritious food to hungry children when the school bell rings. To get started, contact the state child nutrition agency at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>.
- The state agency can provide potential sponsors with more information about the program, an application and inform them when the next CACFP Afterschool Meal Program training takes place.



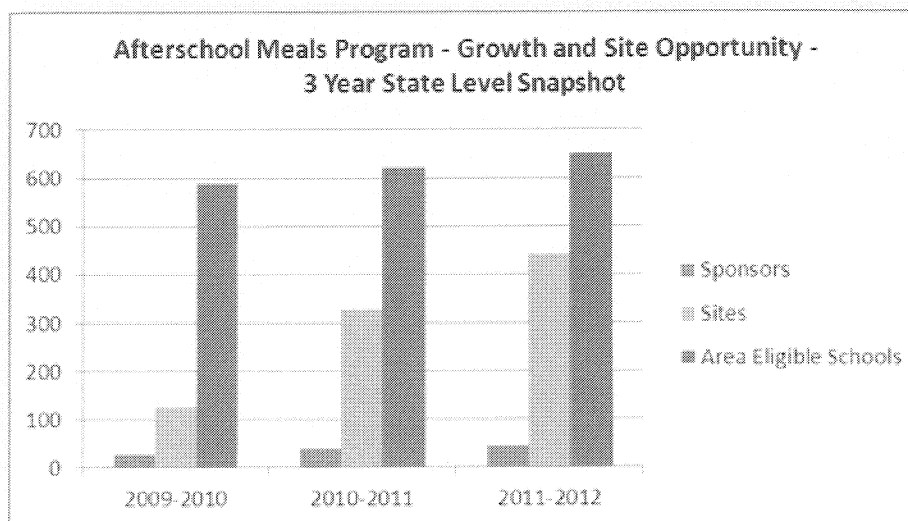
Case Example: Maryland

Maryland Afterschool Meals Annual Totals			
School Year	Children Participating Daily	Afterschool Meal Sites*	Total Meals Served
2009-2010	3,404	126	387,905
2010-2011	8,959	326	1,509,380
2011-2012	11,433	440	1,978,298

* Number of sites claiming meal reimbursement

Top 5 Jurisdictions - By Growth in Children Participating Daily			
	2009-2010	2011-2012	# Increase
Baltimore City	1,229	4,978	3,749
Prince George's	481	2,004	1,523
Montgomery	612	1,677	1,065
Anne Arundel	228	569	341
Washington	145	392	247

Maryland's Federal Afterschool Meals Program Funding					
2009-2010 (\$2.68 per meal)		2010-2011 (\$2.72 per meal)		2011-2012 (\$2.77 per meal)	
Total Meals	Federal \$	Total Meals	Federal \$	Total Meals	Federal \$
387,905	\$1,115,226.88	1,509,380	\$4,411,163.05	1,978,298	\$5,920,056.77



SCHOOL SPONSORS (MD):

- **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):** For the school year of 2011-2012, the Division of Food and Nutrition Services of MCPS provided 182,106 suppers to students at 36 locations and 200,031 afterschool snacks to students at 56 locations. The number of children served per site ranged from 5-300. MCPS sponsors afterschool programs both at schools and in the community. Kitchen facilities that meet state and local health and safety standards to produce school meals provided through the National School Lunch Program are able, in the state of Maryland, to produce additional meals and snacks to be served for an afterschool program located on site or nearby. Food service workers of participating schools are able to extend their hours and are paid overtime to prepare the meals, serve the meals, and maintain the daily meal count records for that school's afterschool program. Some schools may also be assigned to prepare the meals and snacks for the nearby community-based sites. In this instance, afterschool program providers of the community-based sites will pick up the meals and snacks for their program at the nearby school to store and serve at the site itself until it is served. The afterschool program providers are trained by MCPS on program requirements and site responsibilities for handing out the meals and maintaining the meal count and attendance records. They will also be responsible for reporting the number of children in attendance each day to the food service workers of their assigned certified kitchen producing the meals and snacks for their program. Site supervisors on staff at MCPS are responsible for overseeing both the school and community-based sites located in their assigned region of the county.
- **Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS):** For the 2012-2013 school year AACPS is sponsoring 11 afterschool meal sites, serving a total of 1,275 students an estimated 80,000 suppers. AACPS began its sponsorship of the Afterschool Meal Program during the 2011-2012 school year serving a total of 42,374 suppers. AACPS partners with county and community agencies to identify where the need for afterschool meal sites exists and where low-income children are naturally congregating. AACPS prepares all of the meals and snacks for the Afterschool Meal Program in one central school kitchen and then distributes the food to all of its sites based on daily participation numbers. AACPS believes that as a school system they have several advantages to bringing this vital nutrition program to the communities they serve during the regular school day. They know the children and the programming offered throughout the communities they serve, and they have an established expertise with the storage and distribution of snacks and meals because of their work with the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, they have experience in providing nutrition education in conjunction with the meal service and are able to cover any upfront operational costs. AACPS reports that the program financially pays for itself. AACPS sees the operation of the Afterschool Meal Program as a tremendous opportunity to extend their work of supporting the nutritional and educational needs of their students beyond the regular school day.

NON-SCHOOL SPONSORS (MD):

Family League of Baltimore City Inc. – Maryland Providing Meals to More than 100 Afterschool Programs

Afterschool Meal Challenges

Many small afterschool programs do not have the administrative capacity to operate the Afterschool Meal Program. Afterschool programs may need to cover their meal costs prior to receiving their reimbursement, and small programs that operate on a shoestring budget may have trouble “fronting” the funds. Other programs may not have a kitchen or food service experience and have difficulty getting a vendor to prepare and deliver a relatively small number of meals at an affordable price.

Successful Practices

One way to overcome these barriers is for a larger organization to sponsor Afterschool Meals for multiple afterschool programs in the community. The Family League of Baltimore takes on this role for more than one hundred afterschool programs in Maryland, making healthy nutritious after school meals a reality for 7,000 children and teens.

- The Family League assists afterschool programs with the process of becoming sites, such as meeting the health and safety requirements.
- As a sponsor, Family League trains the afterschool program staff to run a safe and effective meal program and to manage the site paperwork, such as the meal count. The training is offered every six months.
- The Family League secured the contract with a food vendor, Business Food Solutions, which offers nutritious meals to all participating programs.
- The vendor delivers the meals to organizations each day.
- The Family League manages the lion’s share of the paperwork and administrative responsibilities for the afterschool programs.

Positive Outcomes

- The Family League’s sponsorship of the Afterschool Meal Program allows the afterschool programs to focus on programming.
- Since the Family League started providing meals, there has been an increase in children and teens participating in the afterschool programs they serve.

The Family League of Baltimore City, Inc. is a quasi-governmental nonprofit organization that works with a range of partners to develop and implement initiatives that improve the well-being of Baltimore’s children, youth and families.

Streamlining the Administrative Requirements for Schools

Operating the Afterschool Meal Program

The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s recent guidance on streamlining the requirements for school food authorities (SFAs) that operate the Afterschool Meal Program creates an exciting opportunity to increase the number of schools participating in the Afterschool Meal Program, expanding children's access to the nutritious afterschool meals they need. Because states are not required to implement many of the streamlining provisions outlined in the guidance, it is crucial that anti-hunger, afterschool, and child advocates encourage their state agencies to adopt the new options. In addition, once states have streamlined the requirements for schools, highlighting the reduction in administrative work can help recruit SFAs to participate in the Afterschool Meal Program. Below are the highlights of the guidance that advocates should be encouraging states to adopt or verifying that states already have implemented.

Agreements

The new guidance re-emphasizes the requirement that state agencies operating both the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) have a single agreement with SFAs operating more than one child nutrition program and that the SFAs should only be required to complete an addendum to their existing agreement to operate NSLP.

Applications

A streamlined application eliminates the redundancy of filling out two applications that each asks for much of the same information. This helps increase the likelihood that a school district will be willing to fill out the application and can reduce the amount of time it takes for an SFA to complete the application, so children do not have to wait as long to receive afterschool meals. The new guidance allows states to:

- Accept a copy of an SFA's NSLP application, instead of requiring it to submit a CACFP application, and to collect the additional information required specifically for CACFP through an addendum to the SFA's NSLP application;
- Consider the successful operation of NSLP as proof of administrative capability and financial viability; and
- Waive the requirement that SFAs submit a separate management plan.

In addition, the guidance states that SFAs are not required to submit a separate CACFP budget.

Training

SFAs are experienced in operating federal child nutrition programs, reducing the need for and type of training SFAs require in order to successfully operate the Afterschool Meal Program. The new guidance states that:

- SFAs are not required to attend training prior to submitting their application to operate the Afterschool Meal Program, nor are members of the food service staff required to attend separate CACFP training on meal services; and
- SFAs are not required to conduct preapproval visits of schools already participating in NSLP.

It also suggests that states offer Afterschool Meal Program training during the regular NSLP training to eliminate the need for SFAs to attend multiple trainings

Meal Patterns

In order to eliminate the challenge of using multiple meal patterns to develop menus, schools have the option of using either the CACFP or the new NSLP meal patterns when serving afterschool meals and can use Offer vs. Serve (OVS) for afterschool meals (OVS is not an option for afterschool snack).

Procurement and Contracting Requirements

The new guidance takes a number of steps to make it easier for SFAs to manage the operations of multiple programs. It allows:

- SFAs to follow the NSLP procurement standards instead of CACFP procurement standards;
- SFAs do not have to store food for one or more of the Child Nutrition Programs separately;
- SFAs are not required to allocate expenses to specific Child Nutrition Programs; and
- SFAs may follow NSLP requirements for contracting with food serve management companies instead of CACFP requirements.

Monitoring

State agencies must combine the monitoring requirements of financial management for SFAs participating in both NSLP and CACFP. If the two programs are administered by separate state agencies, the state agencies must choose which of them will monitor the SFAs financial management of both child nutrition programs. It also must combine CACFP and NLSP monitoring of programmatic requirements, including meal pattern compliance, counting, and claiming.

To learn more about the Afterschool Meal Program, visit FRAC's Afterschool Meals Guide at <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/fracs-afterschool-meals-guide/>

Senate Bill 480

Sponsored by Senator BONAMICI (Pre-session filed.)

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Specifies requirements for training provided by Department of Education related to United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program. Allows Department of Education to award grants related to program.

Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Department of Education for grants and administration of grant program.

Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2011.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to the United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program;
3 appropriating money; and declaring an emergency.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1. (1) The Department of Education shall provide assistance to school districts,**
6 **government agencies and community groups to encourage participation in the United States**
7 **Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program. Assistance must include**
8 **the provision of training that is easily accessible to all regions of this state and may include**
9 **web-based training.**

10 (2) In addition to the assistance provided under subsection (1) of this section, the de-
11 partment may award grants to school districts, government agencies and community groups
12 to enable participation in the United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal
13 and Snack Program. Each grant may not exceed \$10,000 and must be used to:

14 (a) Purchase necessary equipment and services required to provide food service and meet
15 sanitation requirements;

16 (b) Make any payment necessary to comply with sanitation requirements that may be
17 required prior to approval; and

18 (c) Fund participant outreach activities and materials.

19 **SECTION 2. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropri-**
20 **ated to the Department of Education, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2011, out of the**
21 **General Fund, the amounts of:**

22 (1) \$175,000 for the purpose of providing grants to school districts, government agencies
23 and community groups as described in section 1 of this 2011 Act; and

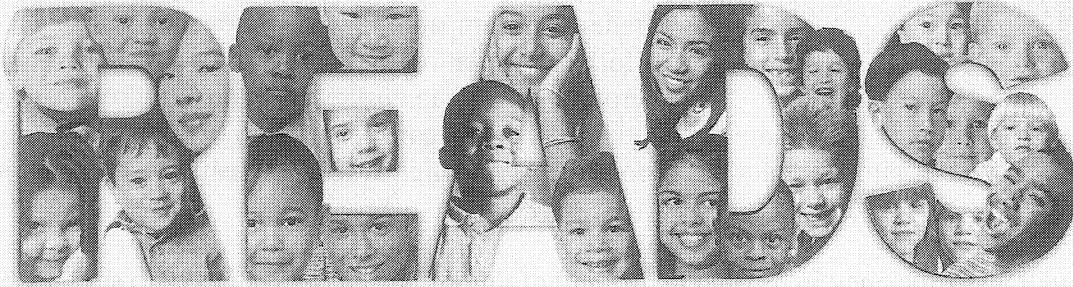
24 (2) \$75,000 for the administration of the grant program described in section 1 of this 2011
25 Act.

26 **SECTION 3. This 2011 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public**
27 **peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2011 Act takes effect**
28 **July 1, 2011.**

29

NOTE: Matter in boldfaced type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted.
New sections are in boldfaced type.

P A T E R S O N



Paterson Education Fund, Convenor
A Community Collaboration of the Paterson Alliance

Jessie Sterling

Paterson Reads, a community collaboration of the Paterson Alliance, with the Paterson Education Fund as convenor, supports Dr. Evans' call for improved student achievement. Focused specifically on reading on grade level by 3rd grade, Paterson Reads aligns community resources to improve summer learning, increase early learning and improve attendance by reducing chronic absenteeism. Now at the midpoint of our first year, Paterson Reads is pleased to report in its progress and future plans.

Improving Summer Learning

During the summer of 2012, Paterson Reads expanded the Paterson Public Library summer reading program, reaching more than 1,200 students with books, reading circles and literacy activities. Thirteen agencies joined the Library's three branches in providing enhanced reading opportunities using the national Collaborative Summer Library Program with the theme, "Dream Big."

Increasing Early Learning

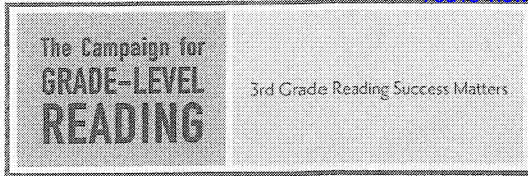
Paterson Reads is working with New Jersey Reach Out and Read to identify additional Paterson pediatricians and funders to implement "Reach Out and Read." Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Reach Out and Read" has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. Studies show that parents that get books and literacy counseling from their doctors and nurses are more likely to read to their young children, read to them more often, and provide more books in the home. Low-income children exposed to Reach Out and Read show improvements in language development, a critical component of school readiness.

Increasing Attendance

Paterson Reads worked with the Paterson Public Schools to implement Breakfast After the Bell to help increase on time attendance at School 8. We are working to expand the effort to additional schools. Paterson Reads members also serve on the Paterson Public Schools' Attendance Committee to improve student and staff attendance across the district.

Future plans:

- create a pipeline from home day care to pre-k to kindergarten to reach the 30% of Paterson children who do not attend pre-school
- expand the 2013 summer reading program to 2,000 students in more than 20 programs with the theme "Dig into Reading"
- extend the reading program year round using the Collaborative Summer Library Program materials



Paterson Reads is one of 124 communities from 34 states representing 350 school districts of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading working to get more kids reading well by the end of third grade. The Campaign for Grade Level Reading is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, states and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income

families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on the most important predictor of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

Research shows that proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn, and to master the more complex subject matter they encounter in the fourth grade curriculum. Most students who fail to reach this critical milestone falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma. Yet two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders are not proficient readers, according to national reading assessment data. This disturbing statistic is made even worse by the fact that more than four out of every five low-income students miss this critical milestone.

Although schools must be accountable for helping all children achieve, providing effective teaching for all children in every classroom every day, the Campaign is based on the belief that schools cannot succeed alone. Engaged communities mobilized to remove barriers, expand opportunities, and assist parents in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to serve as full partners in the success of their children are needed to assure student success.

Paterson EDUCATION Fund

Paterson Education Fund stimulates community action for change so that the Paterson Public Schools ensure that all children reach high standards. For over 30 years, PEF has helped educate Paterson community leaders at all levels about the educational needs of Paterson children. Through forums, workshops, partnerships and direct programming, PEF provides access to information and training. As convener of Paterson Reads, PEF continues to provide leadership to improve literacy in Paterson.

The Paterson Alliance's mission is to advance the quality of life in the City of Paterson through the creation of community partnerships and collaborations. With more than 60 not-for-profit members spanning the gamut of community services, the Paterson Alliance builds a more vibrant Paterson.



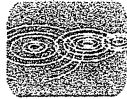
For more information, contact:

Paterson Education Fund, Irene Sterling, President and CEO, 973-881-8914, isterling@paterson-education.org

Paterson Alliance, Leah Dade, Executive Director, 973-985-6363, dade.leah@gmail.com

Paterson Public Library, Cindy Czesak, Director, 973-321-1215, Czesak@patersonpl.org

LINKING DATA AND QUALITY: ELEVATING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE IN NEW JERSEY



professional
IMPACT NJ
advocating growth for
early childhood educators

A presentation to
The Joint Committee on the Public Schools
February 27, 2013

Introductions

- Dr. Sharon Ryan, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers State University
- Ana Berdecia, M.Ed., Senior Fellow/Director, Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children, John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy, Thomas Edison State College
- Dr. Arlene Martin, Executive Director, Professional Impact NJ at Kean University
- Mary Manning-Falzarano, M.S., Clearinghouse Manager, Professional Impact NJ

Who is the Early Childhood Workforce? National Focus

- Primarily women
- Education ranges from GED and criminal background check to higher education degree
- Many are low income and eligible for subsidies
- Salaries of those in non-public school settings are under-funded and some of the lowest paid of all jobs
- Turnover in some sectors is roughly 1/3 per year
- Demographics of the workforce changes by sector

The Workforce is More Than Teachers

- Program and school leaders
- Infrastructure personnel

Federal Policy Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives

- ❑ CCDF/CCDBG: new state plan and reporting requirements put more emphasis on staff qualifications, professional development systems, and workforce data
- ❑ Head Start Act of 2007 requires that 50% (nationally) of teachers have BA degree by 2013
- ❑ Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants include workforce quality through Quality Rating Improvement Systems and higher education systems
- ❑ Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 includes loan forgiveness for early childhood professionals (not yet appropriated)

New Jersey Context

- ❑ Data gathering on different sectors of the workforce
- ❑ Most recent study: Economic Impact Study conducted in 2006
- ❑ NJ Council for Young Children has mapped professional development and preparation opportunities available for differing members of the workforce across the state

The Benefits of Data and Workforce Preparation

- Child Care is an economic driver generating \$2.55 billion gross receipts—more than scientific research and development, clothing and all farm commodities

-Early Care and Education produces 65,300+ full-time jobs in the state of New Jersey (**"Benefits for All."** NJ Economic Impact Study, 2006)

Elevating the Early Childhood Workforce

High quality early childhood education that produces ongoing social and academic benefits for New Jersey's youngest children and society depends on a high quality, well-educated early childhood workforce.

The Challenge:

- ❑ States set the requirements in child care licensing and public Pre-K—most states have no requirement for any training before working with children in a child care program
- ❑ Professional development often paid for by the individual without assistance from employer
- ❑ Difficulty in accessing and participating in professional development because of a lack of substitutes/release time
- ❑ Trainings often do not count toward credential or degree
- ❑ Educational advancement often does not result in a compensation increase

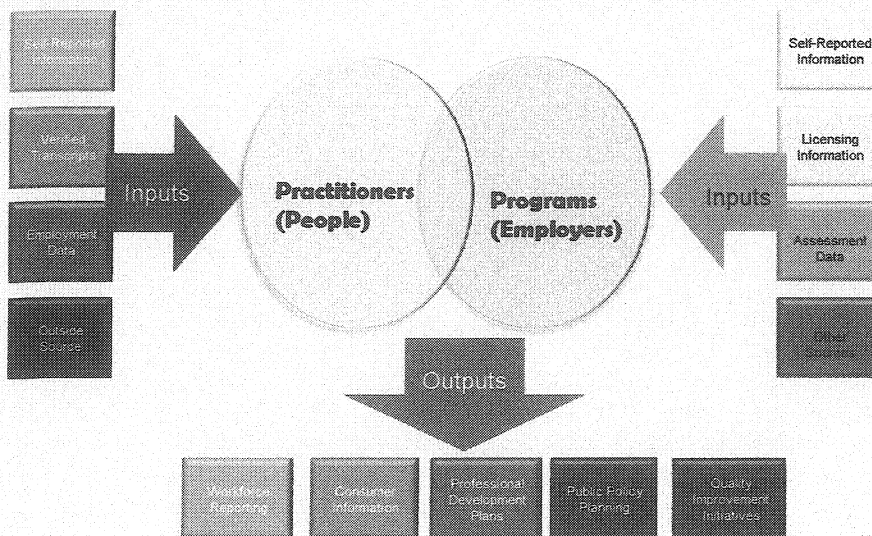
PINJ: Building on State Capacity

- ❑ Professional Impact NJ (PINJ) receives its funding through the New Jersey Department of Human Services-Division of Family Development (NJDFD). NJ Registry owned by NJDFD
- ❑ Founded in 1998 to create the professional development **infrastructure system** in early childhood in New Jersey
- ❑ PINJ is designated to provide professional development opportunities for the field of early care and education in NJ
- ❑ \$27,000,000 in **scholarships** were funded by DHS-DFD and distributed by PINJ between 1999-2010 in NJ Early Childhood (Abbott) Scholarship Program
- ❑ **Services** include: Standards for the Early Childhood Professional, Core Knowledge and Competencies, a Career Lattice, Career Pathways, Credentials, the NJ Registry, Scholarships, Accreditation Facilitation, and ongoing Professional Development Opportunities through a Leadership Institute

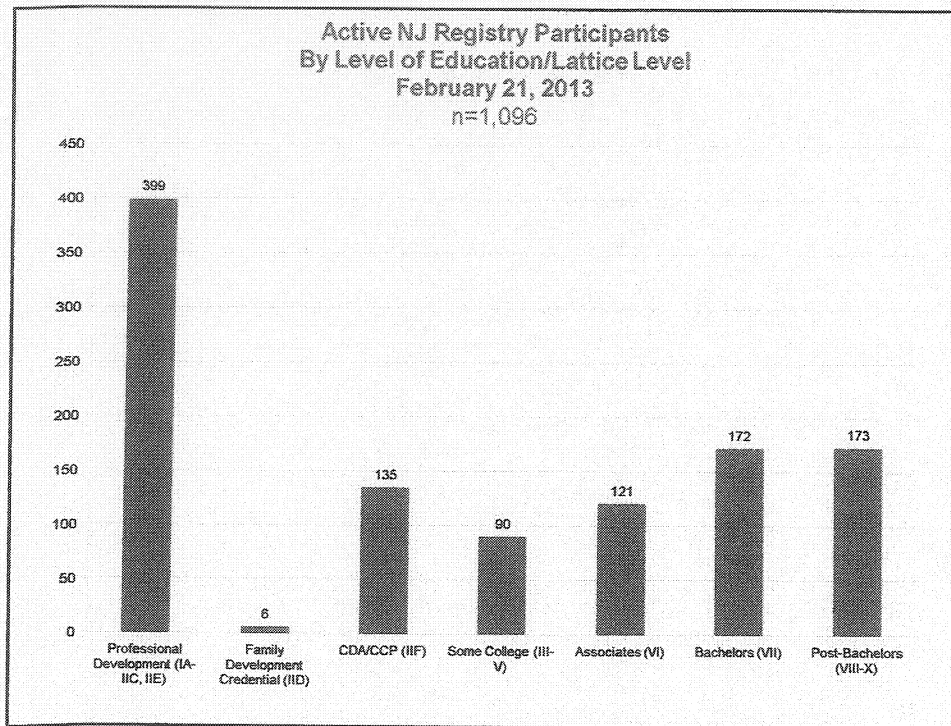
The NJ Registry for Childhood Professionals: It's All About the Data

- ❑ State-of-the-art **early care and education workforce management system** funded since 2003 by NJDHS-DFD in the amount of \$1.9 million.
- ❑ Customized tool designed to collect and maintain data needed for workforce management:
 - ❑ **Participant (People) data** (not just teachers)
 - ❑ **Early Childhood Program (Employer) data** (not just child care programs)
 - ❑ **Approved Instructor Data**
 - ❑ **Other data** needed for quality improvement initiatives, including Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS)
- ❑ Brings **recognition and professionalism** to the field
- ❑ Can **inform policymakers** about the early childhood and school-age workforce

The NJ Registry is built to *collect and link* Participant (People) data and Early Childhood Program (Employer) data



137x



Implications for the Future

- Participation in the NJ Registry is voluntary for all but those who participate in DFD-funded programs
- We need to take advantage of this opportunity to map, monitor and improve the *entire* early childhood workforce, *cross-sector, over time*
- The NJ Registry is essential to the success of QRIS and the improvement of New Jersey's early childhood workforce, resulting in positive outcomes for children
- The NJ Council and PINJ are committed to moving forward to collect cross-sector, accurate data for policy making and improving the early childhood workforce and New Jersey's professional development system
- We have the tool, now we need the policy

Implications (Continued)

- Elevating the early childhood workforce, requires standards, scholarships, incentives and compensation to educate, credential, mentor and professionally develop those who work in all sectors of the field linking quality initiatives with accurate workforce data.

Source:

Robinson, A. *Professional Development of Early Childhood Educators: State Trends, Issues, and a Framework for Policymaking*. NCSL Fellows Program, June 8, 2012.

Benefits For All: The Economic Impact of the New Jersey Child Care Industry. (2006). Prepared by the National Economic Development and Law Center.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the task force, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Sarah Rappoport and I am speaking as a member of Save Our Schools NJ, a nonpartisan grass roots organization with over 9,000 members across the state who believes that all New Jersey children should have access to a high quality public education.

This task force has been charged with evaluating the way New Jersey determines which children are “at risk” because they live in poverty and thus need additional resources to receive a high quality education. In particular, the task force is looking at whether the Free and Reduced lunch program is the best way to measure poverty?

Although Free and Reduced lunch is the national standard for identifying children at risk, the suggestion has been made that ‘wide scale abuse’ exists in the Free and Reduced lunch system and that this abuse is pervasive enough to justify abandoning using Free and Reduced lunch as a measure for New Jersey.

However, this supposed significant abuse is a myth, perpetuated for political reasons, in order to undermine school funding for children living in poverty.

This myth is being fed by a misrepresentation of an audit of the Free and Reduced lunch program that supposedly found that 37 percent of lunch program recipients were ineligible for the program. In reality, that is not at all what the audit found.

First, the audit did not look at the 25 percent of program participants who were automatically eligible for Free or Reduced lunch because their families received food stamps or welfare payments and had been verified through those programs’ very strict standards.¹ So, that 37 percent figure is really only 28 percent of all the students receiving Free and Reduced lunch.

Second, the audit looked ONLY at 3 percent of the families whose children received Free and Reduced lunch and who are considered “on the margin” of eligibility because their incomes were up to \$100 below the income cut off for the program. In other words, if the eligible family income cut off for the program was \$12,000 a year, they contacted 3 percent of those families who reported incomes of \$11,900 to \$12,000, and asked them to prove their income.

If those families actually had income of \$12,001, they were found to be ineligible for the program. However, if the families did not respond to a request for additional documents verifying their income, they were also considered to be ineligible for the program. **And, the majority of people who were found to be ineligible actually consisted of those who did not respond at all to the letter requesting the additional documents.**²

Why would a family not respond to a request for documents verifying their income? There are so many reasons why that could happen and those reasons are greatly increased when dealing with the very poor.

- Most obviously, the request for information may never have reached the family because they moved several times or lost their home entirely and are shuttling between different relatives or living in a shelter or even in a car; problems that are pervasive among the very poor.
- The mail also could have been delivered to the wrong address or taken by someone else from an insecure mailbox; both issues that are much more frequent in low-income neighborhoods.

¹ Stephen Eells, State Auditor, Office of State Legislative Services, Office of the State Auditor, Department of Agriculture July 1, 2008 to March 31, 2011, p. 3: http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/Auditor/10000_2011.pdf.

² Ibid

- The parents may not speak English or the parents could be illiterate, making it that much harder for them to understand and fill out forms.
- The family could be afraid of having done something wrong inadvertently and have not responded out of fear. Imagine if you are powerless and struggling to survive and find out you are being audited? How many of us would not be concerned, even if we had done nothing wrong?
- The family may not have the paperwork necessary to prove their income. Many very poor people work for cash and have multiple low-paying jobs, some of which do not provide them with the necessary documentation of income. And, if you are moving all the time, financial paperwork often gets lost or misplaced in the process.
- Finally, the Mother and Father could just be too busy trying to keep food on the table and a roof over their children's heads by working three jobs. How many of us have **never** missed a bill deadline?

So, the 37 percent we have all heard so much about, which supposedly represents cheating in the Free and Reduced lunch program, is really 28 percent and even that 28 percent actually consists of a tiny sample of a very small group of families right on the edge of qualifying for the program, who mostly failed to send back the necessary forms.

In fact, as Professor Bruce Baker, an expert in school funding, explained, if the Federal audit had instead looked at those families whose income was \$100 too high to qualify for the Free and Reduced lunch program, those making \$12,000 to \$12,100 in our example, it likely would have found that many of them actually qualified for the Free and Reduced lunch program and their children should be receiving the needed meals.³

There is certainly significant anecdotal evidence that the Free and Reduced lunch program actually is being underused by families poor enough to qualify for the program, often because of stigma or fear of revealing information the families prefer to keep private. That means that many children living in poverty are going hungry because they are not able to take advantage of the Free and Reduced lunch program to receive at least two decent meals each day; which may be the only meals they eat.

Unfortunately, the work of this task force could actually make that problem worse by pushing more very poor families not to apply by falsely implying that many of those already in the program are cheating. This would create more stigma and fear around the program. Surely that is not your goal?

In addition, there is not an alternate method to identify at-risk children that can be considered as reliable as the Free and Reduced lunch program.

In the political debate of school funding, we ask that very low-income children not be further victimized through the work of this task force. New Jersey has one of the best public school systems in the country and is a national model in funding its schools fairly by providing the funding necessary for our neediest children.⁴ We should never turn away from that commitment, nor abandon the best national indicator of financial need – the Free and Reduced lunch program.

³ Bob Braun, "Gov. Christie's Task Force Is Unschooled On Nuances Of Education Funding" *The Star Ledger*, April 23, 2012.

⁴ Bruce Baker, David Sciarra and Danielle Farrie, "Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card" June 2012

ADDITIONAL APPENDIX MATERIALS
SUBMITTED TO THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
for the
February 27, 2013 Meeting

Submitted by Cynthia C. Rice, Esq., Senior Policy Analyst, Advocates for Children of New Jersey:

Advocates for Children of New Jersey, "Food for Thought: Expanding School Breakfast to NJ Students," September 2012, © 2012 Giving Every Child A Chance.