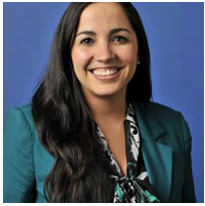


Parents, early educators to meet with legislative finance committee

Written by Amber Wallin, MPA Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children Guest Columnist By Amber Wallin, MPA

Friday, 25 August 2023 03:56



Parents and early educators from across New Mexico will meet with members of the Legislative Finance Committee to address their goals for the state's early education system on Aug. 19. The meeting will take place at the Alamosa Community Center, 6900 Gonzales SW, in Albuquerque, at 1 pm.

During the meeting, parents and early educators will share personal experiences, challenges, and ideas concerning the early education system. They hope to relay their goals for early education funding, which includes the programs that must be protected, like zero copays for parents and increasing early educator wages. They plan to focus the meeting on the need for a wage and career ladder for early educators.

While educators and parents celebrate recent improvements in the early education system, there is more work to be done to make early education a sustainable career, and to make child care programs work better for parents. Continued investments in early childhood education and care programs are necessary in order to ensure our early education system works for educators, parents, and our young kids. Early educators and parents are focused on building a wage and career ladder that allows for early education career advancement and sustainability.

"Early educators are the reason that parents like me are able to work to support our families. They also provide education at the most critical time of development in the lives of our youngest kids. It's time to professionally compensate early educators to ensure that our early education system works the best it can for parents, and for our children," Alma Garcia, an OLÉ member, said.

"The wage and career ladder we have been fighting for is a necessary measure to ensure the success of early childhood education and care programs. If we want New Mexico kids to get the best possible education, we need to start with educators who are compensated professionally

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and can build careers in early education. We can make this profession sustainable by building and funding a wage and career ladder for educators,” Ivydel Natachu, an OLE member, said.

“New Mexico should continue to build on our nation-leading progress in early childhood with this important next step of raising wages and establishing a career ladder. To do so it is key that we protect all early childhood funding sources, including the Early Childhood Trust Fund so that we have the resources to invest in our children and our workforce now and for many generations to come,” Amber Wallin, the Executive Director, New Mexico Voices for Children, said.

“Essential workers in rural New Mexico are struggling to find child care options, limiting our family’s opportunities to work and develop our skills. The state has the opportunity to support rural workers that want to start their own child care centers and earn professional wages, while simultaneously fulfilling an outsized need for child care deserts like Hobbs,” Ana Lilia Hernandez, a mother of four and Somos Un Pueblo Unido member from Hobbs, said.

“Early educators play a crucial role in shaping the development of our youngest kids as they spend significant time each day with them, providing valuable support to our families, especially those coming from the immigrant/refugee communities, including the Asian Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian (APINH). To ensure they have a sustainable career, it is important that we prioritize raising wages and establishing a career ladder for these dedicated professionals. By investing in their well-being and professional growth, we can significantly enhance the lives of our children and strengthen our communities.” –Thu Chau, a Family Coordinator with the New Mexico Asian Family Center, said.

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