



Early Learning Fellows Legislative Corner

March 2016

New “Kids First” Initiative in Massachusetts



Fourth year (2015) NCSL Early Learning Fellow Senator Sal DiDomenico of Massachusetts is looking at the early years as a way to make smart long-term investments. He was asked by the Senate president to lead a new Massachusetts [initiative](#) that will identify the best and innovative ideas to make investments to support Massachusetts children. Specifically, he is heading up a group of Senate members to take a comprehensive and inter-disciplinary look at a wide variety of policy areas that relate to supporting children, such as education, nutrition, public health, housing, and workforce development. The primary focus of the initiative will be on early childhood development from pre-natal through the fourth grade. The group will collaborate with experts in many fields to develop a holistic, long-term strategy to provide all Massachusetts children with the tools they need to be successful now and in the future.

Senator DiDomenico says he is “honored to lead this Kids First Initiative that will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on Massachusetts children for generations to come. By creating an open dialogue among experts, policymakers, and stakeholders alike, I am confident Kids First will deliver a blueprint for supporting strong, resilient children and families.”

Wyoming Utilizing Welfare Dollars for Early Learning



Fourth year (2015) NCSL Early Learning Fellow Representative Mark Kinner now has his first legislative session under his belt. As part of Wyoming’s 2016 budget session, Rep. Kinner was successful in adding to the budget [bill](#) \$650,000 in TANF welfare funds to be used for continuing a high-quality early childhood education grant program that was created in 2014 by the Wyoming Legislature. The details need to be worked out on meeting TANF guidelines for the early learning community grants, but Representative Kinner thinks the funding will support “vulnerable children and is happy to keep [the program] rolling.”

Nebraska Boosts the Early Childhood Workforce Profession



Third year (2014) NCSL Early Learning Fellow Senator Kate Sullivan proposed legislation, [LB 525](#) which was enacted in 2015 and bolsters the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System. Specifically, a database houses Nebraska's information on the early childhood workforce, verifies education degrees and professional credentials and trainings completed. The new law allows early childhood professionals to report their credentials in the database. The data is also linked with Nebraska's QRIS. Senator Sullivan says, "LB525 continues to reinforce Nebraska's emphasis on quality for our early childhood professionals. Streamlining the process of reporting their educational training and linking it to the QRIS says their efforts to improve their education will be recognized and rewarded."

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