

RIGHTS, RAISES, RESPECT

News and Issues for the Early Care and Education Workforce

A monthly electronic newsletter

From the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW)

A project of the AFT Educational Foundation

May 2003

Please feel free to send this to anyone you think would be interested in supporting our efforts. Visit our web site at www.ccw.org for the latest information on the early care and education workforce, CCW/AFTEF activities and our online order form for our publications. (E-Newsletters you receive from CCW/AFTEF will be sent by ccw@v2.listbox.com.)

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THIS MONTH:

Federal Initiatives

- FOCUS Act Reintroduced
- Senate Committee Passes CCDBG Reauthorization

State Initiatives

- Worthy Wage Day Activities
- Universal Preschool Legislation in California
- Wyoming Excludes Child Care Employees from Workers' Compensation

Opportunities & Resources

- Professional Development Grants for Early Childhood Teachers
- A New Resource from the National Women's Law Center, *Using the Military Model to Improve Child Care*

FEDERAL INITIATIVES

FOCUS Act Reintroduced

In honor of Worthy Wage Day, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) have reintroduced the Focus on Committed and Underpaid Staff for Children's Sake Act (FOCUS). The bill was first developed in 2001 by a coalition of advocacy groups including CCW. FOCUS is designed to improve the nation's capacity to attract and retain qualified child care providers by providing scholarships for additional education and training, and by rewarding highly qualified professionals with increased compensation. The reintroduction of FOCUS is a critical step forward in efforts to ensure high quality in early childhood programs, including good professional development opportunities and compensation for early childhood educators. For more information visit <http://www.ccw.org/initiatives/fedinit.html>

Senate Committee Passes CCDBG Reauthorization

On April 2, the Caring for Children Act of 2003, reauthorizing the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), was passed out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. While raising CCDBG funding by only \$220 million a year for the next five years – less than the \$11.25 billion that advocates had called for – the bill did increase the “quality set-aside” portion of funding to states from four to six percent. Among six specified uses of this set-aside, states can use their quality improvement funds to “engage in programs designed to increase the retention and improve the competencies of child care providers, including wage incentive programs and initiatives that establish tiered payment rates for providers that meet or exceed child care services guidelines.” The Senate is expected to mark up the mandatory funding for the measure during May, and the bill will then go to the Senate floor for a vote.

STATE INITIATIVES

Worthy Wage Day Activities

Once again, Worthy Wage Day was observed on May 1 with activities across the country, including a “National Child Care Worthy Wage Day” resolution introduced in Congress by Sen. Jon Corzine (D-N.J.) and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.). Led by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA), some 150 parents, teachers and providers encircled the state capitol in Madison with a paper chain covered with messages and signatures. Participants then visited their legislators, bringing them each a piece of the chain as well as their concerns about child care workforce issues. Meanwhile, WECA has expanded its Professional Development Corps, which seeks to build a stronger, unified voice for Wisconsin’s child care workforce, to include TEACH scholarship recipients along with stipend recipients in the REWARD program.

In Greensboro, North Carolina, the Association of Early Childhood Professionals (AECPP) held a morning of “job shadowing” that included public officials and community members, such as representatives from the N.C. Department of Social Services, United Way, the local Smart Start board and a local Teamsters union leader. The participants received a “mock” check that displayed how much they would have earned for the 2 hours of work – they were “horrified” at the amount. The job shadowing was followed by a community dialogue about solutions to the child care staffing crisis.

Thank you to all who participated in Worthy Wage Day and continue to be a powerful voice for the early care and education workforce!

Universal Preschool Legislation in California

In California Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) has introduced Assembly Bill 56, co-sponsored by Wilma Chan (D-Oakland) and Carol Liu (D-La Canada), to advance the development of universal preschool in California. While there has been little opposition to the concept, funding for the program is a major concern, given California’s severe budget crisis. Assemblyman Steinberg has said he would support redirecting much of the state’s current child care funding toward the universal preschool system, a move that could be highly divisive in the early care and education community. We will keep you updated in future issues.

Meanwhile, a new policy and research report by former CCW writer Dan Bellm and founding CCW Executive Director Marcy Whitebook, “Universal Preschool in California: An Overview of Workforce Issues,” is now available at the web site of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, and can be downloaded at <http://www.iir.berkeley.edu/cscce/reports.html>. The paper offers a brief profile of California’s current early care and education workforce, and focuses on three main areas of concern: possible delivery mechanisms for universal preschool services; standards for staff qualifications and compensation; and professional development

needs and higher education system capacity. The Center is housed at the University of California at Berkeley's Institute of Industrial Relations.

Wyoming Excludes Child Care Employees from Workers' Compensation

On March 6, Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal signed into law a measure amending the state workers' compensation program, to exclude from the definition of "employee" all child care providers receiving subsidy from the Wyoming Department of Family Services. The program offers medical, wage and disability benefits to workers injured on the job.

OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES

Professional Development Grants for Early Childhood Teachers

The U.S. Department of Education's Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program is offering \$15 million in professional development grants to assist early childhood teachers in promoting school readiness. Eligible applicants include partnerships of one or more colleges, public agencies, child care agencies, faith-based organizations or others with experience in training early childhood educators. Special attention will be given to applicants who work with disadvantaged children. Applications are due May 16. For information, go to: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/ecprofdev.html> or contact the Education Publications Center at 877-433-7827.

A New Resource

The National Women's Law Center has released a collection of materials that includes updated 2000 Census data and identifies ways for state advocates and policymakers to use the military model to help defend against cutbacks that states across the country are facing. ***A Toolkit for Advocates: Using the Military Model to Improve Child Care*** can be downloaded at www.nwlc.org, in the Child Care section, under "The Military Model of Child Care."

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The Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project and in 2002 merged with the American Federation of Teachers (AFTEF). CCW/AFTEF is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization committed to improving early care and education quality by upgrading the compensation, working conditions and training of early childhood professionals.