

John C. Carney
Governor of Delaware
Carvel State Office Building
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December 7, 2018

Governor Carney:

We understand that you have met with Gary Stockbridge, chair of the Vision Coalition Leadership Team, on the topic of early learning governance. We are writing this letter to express our appreciation for your interest in tackling this important issue, and to share further evidence, based on community input and national research, for the need to consolidate early learning governance. We hope this will help inform the path forward.

As you know, in 2015, leaders of the Vision Coalition released a 10-year plan for education in Delaware called *Student Success 2025*, created in collaboration with more than 4,000 Delawareans—including 1,300 students and recent graduates. This plan calls for the state to “develop an aligned state governance structure to enable unified and efficient decision making as well as new and sustainable sources of funding.”

Currently, many different government agencies and offices are involved in the administration and oversight of early childhood education—11 divisions across three agencies. As a result, various departments run different and sometimes parallel programs, which makes optimizing services difficult and creates challenges for all involved. **Consolidating early learning governance into a single cabinet agency would have the following benefits, and reduce the following challenges for service providers, families, and ultimately the young children of Delaware:**

<p>Efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce duplication of service in government. For example, DDOE and DHSS currently hold contracts with several of the same agencies for the same purposes. These redundancies take up valuable staff time and capacity and cause confusion for the contractors, who are often met with different expectations ▪ Create synergy of service and reduce burden on small business and nonprofit child care providers. For example, these individual providers deal with mental health consultants, licensing specialists, Stars technical assistants, and others. ▪ More effective infrastructure. Currently, to connect Purchase of Care with Stars with licensing takes several people and significant time.
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<p>Improved customer service and family access to services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enable common intake/application process for families and children. ▪ Clarify points of contact. Currently, families go to Purchase of Care (DHSS DSS), licensing (DSCYF), and Stars (DDOE)—just for child care information. Other developmental needs require additional services from Public Health (DHSS PDH), Birth-3 (DHSS OMS), Part B (DDOE). ▪ Provide coherent set of services to meet needs. ▪ Streamline customer service and communication with families.
<p>Clear authority and alignment of funding and policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable a common approach to quality improvement across efforts such as technical assistance, professional development, monitoring, outreach, assessment. • Create common standards and expectations for children’s outcomes and provider qualifications. Currently the DDOE standards are not used across agencies.
<p>Focus and expertise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus one group and coalesce expertise. Currently early learning is no one agency’s single priority. • Elevate early learning as an issue and recruit the best talent. • Target resources to where the expertise is. For example, millions in quality dollars are overseen by administrators who are focused and have expertise on workforce eligibility issues for parents, rather than quality developmental learning experiences for children. • Place authority with those with expertise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For example, licensing specialists focused on health and safety standards are approving professional qualifications of teachers, which is the expertise of others.
<p>Better outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely for families to get services they need and to experience better transitions from services to services. • More likely for higher, consistent standards of service and data tracking.

This is a national trend. In the past decade, more than 20 states have undergone early learning governance reform. States that have created **cabinet-level agencies for early learning** (such as Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, and Washington) are seen as national leaders in terms of progress and services. Delaware has the potential to be a national leader with this governance change, and drastically improve the quality of early learning service and outcomes for our students and families.

We hope you will charge the Office of Management and Budget now with engaging a variety of experts, including the Vision Coalition and Early Childhood Council, to propose a plan in 2019 to consolidate governance into a single cabinet agency, and that implementation of this plan would start 2020. We understand this would require reclassifying positions, transferring budgets and responsibility, and aligning workstreams, and we are ready to support your administration in this effort to prioritize early childhood.

Thank you for your support, and for keeping students at the center and as the priority. We look forward to hearing from you or your designated point person.

Sincerely,
The Vision Coalition Leadership Team

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