

## **Redding Consortium for Educational Equity**

### **Funding and Governance Work Group**

**November 19, 2020 5:00–6:30 p.m.**

#### **Welcome and Roll Call**

The virtual meeting started at 5:00 p.m. Co-chair of the Funding and Governance Work Group, Eugene Young, welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting norms.

#### **Referendum Reform Legislation**

Young explained co-chair Nnamdi Chukwuocha would be unable to attend the meeting that night, but the group would be providing feedback on the newly updated draft of House Bill 129 (HB 129). He added that Natalie Woloshin of Woloshin, Lynch & Associates, was in attendance to answer technical questions about the bill. Young reviewed the key points of the bill.

Secretary Rick Geisenberger suggested the Work Group add a provision that acknowledges the potential for property reassessment in 2024. He said this is due to the fact the public is weary of the tax increases expected to come after the reassessment. Chuck Longfellow, Jill Floore, and Aaron Bass recommended that there should be no lower limit for school board tax increases. Dan Shelton suggested instead that school boards have the option to use the one-time catch-up provision at their own discretion. Tika Hartsock responded there should be a cutoff point for when school boards can use the one-time catch-up provision. There was a debate on the bill's language about tuition and match tax. Emily Falcon recommended getting public input on the bill's language. Longfellow added that HB 129 should be clear that it does not apply to major capital taxes.

Young then asked the group two discussion questions. The first question was: should there be a provision that would allow the General Assembly to raise the tax cap if there were extraordinary circumstances. Geisenberger felt this provision was unnecessary because the General Assembly always holds the power to amend a bill. Shelton disagreed because this bill addressed local funding, which the General Assembly does not have direct control over. The next question was if the bill should include a reporting component. Floore stated the reporting component was unnecessary because school districts are required to give a budget presentation which shows how they used their funding. Hartsock responded that educators feel there is lack of transparency about how school districts spend money, and therefore there should be a reporting component added to HB129. Geisenberger agreed with Hartsock and added that this bill would require additional transparency measures in order to be passed.

James Dechene asked if the members of the Work Group were required to show their support for HB 129, even if they disagreed. He also asked why the group shifted gears from redistricting. Young responded that he does not expect everyone to come to consensus on every issue. He added that group shifted gears from redistricting due to the funding impacts of COVID-19, but in January the Work Group plans to revisit redistricting. Dechene asked what

would happen if a school board decided not to increase taxes to the amount HB 129 allows them too. Shelton responded this is most likely why a lower limit was required.

### **Engagement Strategy**

Young explained developing an engagement strategy was integral in getting HB 129 passed. He added that this would require a coordinated effort from the Work Group to develop a strategy that engaged and involved the community. Haley Qaissaunee, Institute of Public Administration (IPA) staff, explained the engagement strategy framework the Work Group would use to guide their future efforts. This framework included identifying key stakeholder groups, messaging for each group, and the materials needed to educate these groups. Hartsock added that this engagement strategy would discuss HB 129 and educate the public on Delaware's education funding system, so stakeholders feel better prepared to support efforts like referendum reform. Chris Kelly, IPA, emphasized the importance of crafting the correct messaging for specific groups. Young explained they will share this framework to the Work Group members after the meeting so they can add their ideas.

### **Public Comment**

Amy Solomon suggested the Work Group collaborate with the Friends of Christina group. She added that they have powerful stories of the negative impacts of trying to get a referendum passed. She said they are pushing for referendum reform and would be great for public engagement. Mary Schorse agreed with Solomon and said the Friends of Christina group was ready to support this Work Group. Troy commented that he would like to receive more information about the Work Group and become more involved.

**The meeting ended at 6:20 p.m.**

## Attendance

### **Consortium Members**

Eugene Young—Co-chair  
Aaron Bass  
James DeChene  
Emily Falcon  
Jill Floore  
Richard Geisenberger  
Dorrell Green  
Jason Hale  
Tika Hartsock  
Linc Hohler  
Chuck Longfellow  
Maria Matos  
Jeff Menzer  
Dan Shelton  
Margie López Waite  
Mary Nash Wilson

### **Institute of Public**

#### **Administration/Delaware**

#### **State University**

Jason Bourke  
Christopher Kelly  
Jerome Lewis  
Francis O'Malley  
Cimone Philpotts  
Kelly Sherretz  
Haley Qaissaunee  
Alexis Wrease

### **Public**

Evelyn Brady  
Kevin Carson  
Nyra Giles  
Jeffery James  
Jamie Johnstone  
Brendan Laux  
Vj Leonard  
Shanika Perry  
Rob Seward  
Mary Schorse  
Amy Solomon  
Natalie Woloshin  
Tammy  
Troy