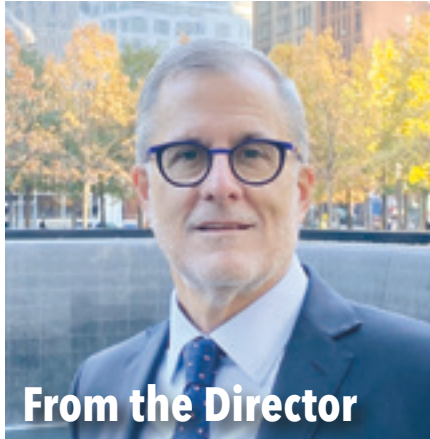


PERSPECTIVES 2023-2024



Eastern Regional Conference
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS



Credit: Leo Biette-Jimmons.

This year, The Council of State Governments is celebrating its 90th anniversary. True to its origins, CSG continues to serve its members with the strength of a regional structure and the impact of a national organization to deliver exceptional value to the states.

CSG was officially founded in 1933 as a national nonpartisan organization following a meeting of state legislators from around the country who had gathered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. To quote an article in *Capitol Ideas Magazine* in early 2023 commemorating CSG's 90th anniversary, "By 1939, the organization had reached national acclaim for its collaborative nature and efficiency..." Earlier that year, *The New York Times* published an editorial noting how CSG successfully facilitated an interstate compact between New Jersey and New York, which established joint authority over the Palisades Interstate Park.

The CSG Eastern Regional Conference (now known as CSG East) had already been established in 1937 and, after the Second World War, CSG continued to broaden its service area and its scope through the expansion of its regional presence with Midwest, West, and South offices. CSG's structure has permitted it to have a broad national view, but also more focused regional perspectives, which sets CSG apart from the other organizations that serve state officials.

Early this year, CSG East undertook a survey of its members in the Eastern region to determine which policy issues

were attracting the most attention in our 18 jurisdictions. Housing — its affordability and accessibility — was by far the top issue, followed by workforce development and mental health. Lack of affordable housing (and in some cases, lack of available housing at all) has been acute, not only cities and suburbs in the East, but also in our rural areas. CSG East brought on a new policy analyst in September to handle housing issues, particularly as they relate to our other policy areas: how transportation affects housing; the intersection of housing, health, education, and the environment; housing issues experienced by communities of color in particular; rural housing issues; and how lack of housing affects the workforce. Housing was also the subject of one of the plenary sessions at this year's annual meeting.

CSG East's 62nd Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum was hosted by Ontario August 20-23. The meeting, rescheduled from 2021, featured a new meeting format with more multidisciplinary — and longer — sessions that allowed deeper dives into policy questions facing our region. Among other important policy conversations, the Transportation and Canada-U.S. Relations Committees jointly looked at transportation infrastructure at the border; the Energy and Environment and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committees discussed regenerative agriculture; and our Health Committee and the Council on Communities of Color tackled health care financing.

Ontario's hospitality for the Annual Meeting was extraordinary, with multiple excursions for guests to visit cultural sites around the region, a truly incredible Executive Committee and Corporate Contributors Dinner at the magnificent Hockey Hall of Fame, and the much-praised opening event at the Ontario Legislative Building at Queen's Park.

The Annual Meeting also served as a springboard for policy issues that will form our agenda for the coming year. An outcome of the standing-room-only Roundtable on State Policies Governing

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also called "forever chemicals") is a CSG East task force to investigate PFAS legislation in the region, which will hold several virtual sessions and an in-person conference on the topic in the coming year.

Next year, Maryland will host CSG East's 63rd Annual Meeting and Policy forum July 28-31, 2024, at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel. We look forward to working with incoming co-chairs Senate President Bill Ferguson and Speaker Adrienne Jones and with the Maryland host committee, chaired by Senator Nancy King and Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, who promise an exciting and interesting social program.

We also celebrate the work of Rona Cohen and Véronique Cavaillier, who left CSG East this year. Rona, who staffed the Energy and Environment Committee, and Véronique, who served as director of the Eastern Trade Council as well as director of leadership training programs, each gave more than 20 years of extraordinary service to CSG East. Steve Hewitt, our transportation policy consultant who served as half of the transportation policy team, is retiring after 14 years with CSG East as well. We are incredibly thankful for the many years CSG East has benefited from the tireless, creative, and dedicated work of these public servants, and we wish each of them nothing but the best in the years ahead.

CSG East continues to champion excellence in public service in the states to put the best ideas and solutions into practice. As one of our members wrote to us following the Annual Meeting, "CSG East is the best policy networking environment I've found in my short time in elected office: you provide meaningful policy discussions with technical expertise and awareness of the level of effort required to make policy changes into reality."

David N. Biette
Director, CSG Eastern Office

CSG East: Creating Policy Solutions

Since 1933, The Council of State Governments (CSG) has brought state leaders together to share ideas and collectively meet the many challenges of governing.

Headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, CSG features four regional offices: East, Midwest, South, and West.

CSG's Eastern Regional Conference (CSG East) has been located in New York City since 1937. Our team of experienced policy staff supports legislative, judicial, and executive branch officials from our 18 member jurisdictions in areas relating to agriculture and rural affairs, Canada-U.S. relations, education and workforce development, energy and environment, fiscal affairs, health, housing, international trade, and transportation.

CSG East facilitates the exchange of ideas among its member states, provinces, and territories, offers members opportunities to forge relationships with peers working in neighboring states, and conducts fact-based research and analysis to help shape effective public policy.

CSG East also facilitates leadership training and professional development through the Eastern Leadership Academy, held in Philadelphia each August, and the EASTrain program, which brings trainings directly to capitol buildings and member retreats around the region.

CSG East is here for you. Call, email, or visit us online at www.csg-erc.org.

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Credit: Matthew Tighe

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Eastern Regional Conference
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Regional Leaders and Experts Explore New Ideas to Address Housing Crisis

BY DYLAN MCDOWELL



Credit: Shutterstock

“We weren’t that popular 15-20 years ago, talking about affordable housing,” said Jennifer Keesmaat, a Canadian urban planner and chief city planner of Toronto from 2012-17.

“Calling for a serious effort to build more affordable housing was considered progressive and relegated to the fringe of the political spectrum,” she said. “But that has led us to exactly this moment today, when every community is talking about this issue and feeling the impacts.”

Keesmaat, who now leads the Keesmaat Group along with her team of city-building experts, has more than a little skin in the game. As a former planner, one-time candidate for mayor of Toronto, and now a major developer of new housing in the Greater Toronto Area, she has seen how the gap between housing supply and demand has sent prices skyrocketing, both there and around the continent.

Moderating a plenary panel of Canadian and American housing experts for the 2023 CSG East Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, she urged state and provincial leaders to consider not only “how we got here,” but also that some solutions are beginning to emerge. When and where those ideas can be identified, Keesmaat emphasized, “we need to do the things that work and do them *at scale* — to amplify and multiply” the best practices.

Zoning Reform in Our Regional “Backyard”

Kicking off the binational panel, Ryan Fecteau — former speaker of the Maine House of Representatives — helped explain some of those ideas.

He highlighted efforts in Maine to create a state-level affordable housing tax credit, establish a rural community

rental program, and — perhaps most important — enact zoning reforms that would allow for greater density, accessory dwelling units, and other new construction that could provide much-needed housing. Zoning reform, he said, was especially important — something that he was proud to lead as a legislator and a practice he commended fellow attendees from Maine for continuing to improve and expand. He cited California, Oregon, and Vermont as other states working at the forefront of the zoning reform movement.

Fecteau also confronted the realities of NIMBYism. Pointing to a growing realization by most policymakers that the most visible opponents of new construction are usually “very vocal, but not representative of the [greater public majority],” Fecteau said that some practical solutions are being tried around the region. In New Hampshire, he said, leaders created a state-level appeals board for developers and other housing advocates to request reexamination of new construction plans previously denied by local officials. Keesmaat added that advocates could also fight fire with fire, explaining that “YIMBY,” or “Yes In My Backyard,” groups were popping up to lead their own political movement that advocates for more housing at all costs, and that such groups — including More Neighbours Toronto — had already made progress in getting some new projects approved that would almost certainly have been defeated in the past.

But changing the permitting and zoning won’t be enough on its own, said Jesse Helmer, who joined the panel from the Ontario-based Smart Prosperity Institute.

“We approved a 400-unit building downtown, but it’s still vacant,” he said, citing his hometown of London,

Ontario, where he served two terms as a city councillor. “They have all the permissions, but nothing is there. Whether it’s counter-cyclical public investment or something else, we need to find ways to actually have development where the road is cleared for it.”

Helmer also pointed to an aging construction and renovation workforce as a potential pitfall for plans to expand construction of new housing. Those plans, and the goals set within them, are already in jeopardy, he said, and data show most municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area are already falling behind on construction targets. He said that, in addition to NIMBYism and the lack of political will, increasing interest rates had contributed to a slow-down in new housing plans.

Help for the Most Vulnerable

Finally, adding vital perspective to the panel, Dr. Tim Aubry, a professor at the University of Ottawa, spoke about solving the crisis for the most vulnerable people in our societies — people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Aubry said that point-in-time studies, recently resumed following pandemic-related pauses, showed a significant increase in chronic homelessness. A 2022 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development report found that “[the] number of chronically homeless individuals (individuals with disabilities experiencing homelessness for long periods of time) increased by 16 percent between 2020 and 2022.”

Those affected, Aubry said, were the least likely to find

housing and escape the cycle of homelessness without direct and long-term assistance.

“It’s really a failure of social policy, and an equity issue too. The people who end up chronically homeless are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and new immigrants,” he said.

But that doesn’t mean we don’t know how to fix it. Building on solutions being put to effective use in countries like Norway and Finland, Aubry cited a few key strategies for solving chronic homelessness. These include laws establishing housing as a fundamental right, emergency support to keep people in housing or rapidly rehouse them upon their becoming homeless, and housing first — an approach that pairs immediate rehousing with support services.

“We do have evidence-based strategies and policies that can solve this problem, we just need the commitment to put them into place,” he said.

That idea was echoed throughout the plenary session, and presenters stressed the importance of sharing these solutions across state and provincial lines as they continue to be tested and implemented locally.

In response to overwhelming demand from members, CSG East is expanding its research support and programming on housing policy. For more on upcoming policy events and how to access CSG East housing policy resources, contact housing policy analyst Joseph Shiovitz at jshiovitz@csg.org. ■



Housing Panel collage - from left to right - Jennifer Keesmaat, Ryan Fecteau, Jesse Helmer, Tim Aubry.

Learning to Read: State Solutions to Improve Literacy

BY ANDREW JOHNSON



Delaware Governor John Carney visits students at a local school.

Results from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation’s Report Card, have confirmed the fears of many state leaders focused on the extent of learning loss since the COVID-19 pandemic. NAEP conducted the long-term trend assessment of 9- and 13-year-olds and released the results in late 2022 and mid-2023, respectively. Reading scores for 9-year-olds declined by five points compared to 2020 — the largest drop in 30 years. Reading scores for 13-year-olds dropped four points compared to 2020, the lowest score in nearly 20 years. NAEP assessments administered to fourth and eighth graders indicated a three-point decline in both grades compared to 2019.

The nation’s downward trend in reading performance, however, predates the pandemic. In 2019, the national average for the NAEP reading score for fourth graders had declined compared to 2017, and only 34 percent of students performed at or above the *NAEP Proficient* level.

Vermont Senate Education Chair Brian Campion, reviewing recent data, described the numbers as “really startling,” while he and the committee worked on legislation to address literacy declines. The committee looked to the numbers as a reminder to show them “why we’re here — this is what we need to address,” he said.

Senator Campion and his committee — alongside other state leaders in the Eastern Region — are currently working on legislation to address literacy declines, advancing a few key ideas emerging in states around the country.

Why Focus on Literacy?

“Children learn to read by grade three and then read to learn for the rest of their lives,” said Delaware Governor

John Carney, 2023 CSG national president, as he signed a proclamation recognizing September as Literacy Month. “Literacy is the foundation that each of our students and neighbors need for success.”

Creating an early foundation for literacy drives student achievement in later grades by preventing declines in the first place. Amid the nationwide declines in student performance, many states, including Delaware, are focusing on ensuring foundational literacy skills are embedded in early grades. In Delaware, schools serving kindergarten through third-grade students adopt a curriculum from a list of evidence-based reading instruction curricula and ensure reading teachers complete professional development aligned with the science of reading. Additionally, teacher preparation programs for reading specialists, elementary, early childhood education, and special education teachers are required to provide instruction in evidence-based reading practices.

In 2021, Vermont passed Senate Bill 114, legislation that aims to improve literacy from prekindergarten through grade 12 by funding professional development in evidence-based literacy instruction and evaluating the extent to which teacher preparation programs provide this training to candidates. Senator Campion hopes this bill will help students achieve academic, personal, and professional success.

“I want our kids in Vermont to be equipped with the skills so that they can compete nationally and internationally, have the lives that they want, lead the lives that they want to lead. And that all goes back to education and

making sure that they have these skills. A lot of that goes right back to literacy.”

He said his “ah-ha” moment came during committee testimony when teachers came forward describing the limited training they’ve received in teaching reading. “It was pretty powerful. . . . I felt it was really, particularly brave of them.”

Senate Bill 114 requires a review of teacher preparation programs to assess how these programs prepare candidates to use evidence-based literacy instruction. It further establishes and funds technical assistance — including professional development — to help schools implement evidence-based literacy instruction and methods to teach literacy in the five key areas of literacy instruction: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. These areas, derived from the National Reading Panel, are often referred to as “evidence-based literacy” or the “science of reading.”

What Is the Science of Reading?

The science of reading is a term referring to a vast body of research studies on effective literacy instruction, or evidence-based practices. It generally refers to instruction addressing the five major literacy principles mentioned above. The term “science of reading” was popularized by journalist Emily Hanford, who has been investigating how children are taught to read since 2017.

Mississippi is credited as the first state to implement the principles of the science of reading into state law in 2013. Now, early results from state assessment scores have brought still more attention to the state’s literacy policy. In 2022, Mississippi saw significant growth in fourth-grade reading performance compared to other states, moving up 28 spots in national rankings from 2013 to 2022.

As of July 2023, 32 states and the District of Columbia have implemented policies related to evidence-based reading instruction, according to an *Education Week* analysis. As more states adopt policies related to the science of reading, they are doing so largely by incorporating it into educator preparation and professional development, changing curriculum, and including the practices in intervention support, especially for students behind grade level or students with dyslexia.

But some are calling for caution, too. In her podcast *Sold a Story*, Hanford expresses fear that untested, ineffective practices will go into place as states and schools rush to adopt new curricula. Similar concerns stem from the fact that the science of reading isn’t simply a curriculum package; rather, it’s a body of research on how we learn to read.

“I want our kids in Vermont to be equipped with the skills so that they can compete nationally and internationally, have the lives that they want, lead the lives that they want to lead. And that all goes back to education and making sure that they have these skills. A lot of that goes right back to literacy.”

– Vermont Senator Brian Campion

Bailey Cato Czupryk, the New Teacher Project’s senior vice president for learning, impact, and design, noted the importance of bridging the gap between this research and providing teachers the skills needed to implement research-based instructional practices in a 2023 op-ed. The organization embraced the science of reading movement early on, but recognizes that implementation support is needed to prepare current educators to use these methods effectively and equitably. Furthermore, science of reading legislation sparks concerns over local control, specifically regarding the role of the legislature in prescribing curriculum and instructional practices.

How Can States Further Improve Literacy?

Early literacy is key for creating a foundation for successful learning, but how can state leaders address performance declines in older student populations?

Vermont’s Senate Bill 114 does more than address early literacy instructions — it creates the Advisory Council on Literacy to advise the executive and legislative branches on how to improve and sustain literacy proficiency for students in prekindergarten through 12th grade. Council membership includes experts, literacy instructors, and community members, including a high school student who struggled or supported someone who struggled with literacy proficiency.

Other popular strategies to address and remedy learning loss include expanded learning time and high-impact tutoring. These strategies predate COVID-19 and were often used to address at-risk students.

Expanded Learning Time

Expanded learning time, or out-of-school-time learning, involves programming outside the traditional school day. This can include before-school, after-school, summer,

continued on page 13

New Vehicles, Old Infrastructure: How States Can Prepare for the EV Revolution

BY DON HANNON AND STEVE HEWITT



A little over a decade since the first plug-in hybrids were being pulled off trucks at dealerships around the region, it seems impossible to avoid the flood of advertisements from car companies touting their newest electric vehicles (EVs). Car manufacturers are racing to tap into the rapidly growing consumer EV market, and the numbers are starting to show the increasing adoption rate of EVs.

EVs now make up seven percent of all new car sales in the United States. Over 40 EV models are currently available in the United States, and that figure is expected to more than double by next year.

Why is this, and what does it mean for the state and local governments tasked with building and maintaining the infrastructure these vehicles will be using?

EV Revolution

EVs are still at the forefront of the green revolution in clean technologies, but the growth in sales has as much to do with saving green as going green.

As drivers hit the road again following pandemic-related dips in gas prices, the cost of running traditional, internal combustion vehicles is as high and as unpredictable as ever. Add in the increasing efficiency offered by newer electric models (EVs can travel the same distance as gas-powered vehicles using approximately 24 percent less energy), lower maintenance costs, and significant government incentives, rebates, and tax credits for EVs, and the math starts to work strongly in favor of today's electric models. Still more promising is the reduced cost of producing EVs, thanks in

part to rapidly improving battery technology, and the expansion of charging infrastructure.

But while these savings will be a major attraction to consumers, they also raise important questions for lawmakers.

Are States Ready?

State leaders in the region have hailed the positive impacts of EVs, but they also know that there are significant implications for state transportation funding, too.

As more drivers make the switch from gas-powered vehicles to electric, states will see declining revenues from the most important infrastructure funding stream: gasoline taxes. The gas tax has traditionally been the primary funding source for road maintenance, construction, and other transportation-related projects. In the United States, gas taxes account for nearly 40 percent of state transportation funding. The consequences are obvious: although the need for roads will continue to rise, the money paying for expanding transportation infrastructure and the maintenance of existing roads, bridges, and tunnels will dwindle.

Getting ahead of this issue early, the CSG East Transportation Policy Committee, led by its chair, Representative Pat Brennan of Vermont, and vice-chair, Senator Louis DiPalma of Rhode Island, has identified this rapid EV growth as affecting critical transportation funding and maintenance issues for all our member states, provinces, and territories.

At the 2022 CSG East Annual Meeting held in

Manchester, New Hampshire, the Transportation Policy Committee hosted a session led by Syracuse University's Professor Jay Golden, during which he provided an analysis of how the increasing share of EVs will affect New York State's gas tax revenues.

The work has continued from there. Having met Golden at the 2022 meeting, Senator DiPalma invited Golden and his team of students to conduct a similar analysis for Rhode Island. The results of that effort were presented by Senator DiPalma one year later, at the 2023 annual meeting in Toronto, Ontario.

Senator DiPalma spoke of how the increasing share of EVs will affect his state. His presentation highlighted forecasts for declining fuel tax revenues over the next decade and the pressing need to address this funding gap. He noted that all alternative options are on the table. However, he stated, "We need a sound tax and user fee policy when it comes to EVs, one that's simple, transparent, neutral, and stable."

Concerning alternative options, many CSG members are investigating new ways to raise revenue for infrastructure and replace declining gas tax income including:

- Increasing the gas tax (the least popular, but most straightforward method)
- Implementing registration fees for EVs
- Seeking additional federal funding
- Introducing road usage charges based on the number of miles traveled

In addition to the loss of revenue, the increasing use of EVs could have other implications for the bridges, roads, and highways that connect CSG East member states. Due to the weight of their batteries, EVs are generally heavier than their gas-powered counterparts, a difference that could lead to faster degradation of roads and bridges and higher maintenance costs.

Additionally, with less range than gasoline-powered vehicles, there is a greater demand for funding for more EV charging stations. A perceived lack of convenient, fast, and reliable public EV charging stations may put the brakes on EV adoption by consumers. A recent Washington Post-University of Maryland poll found that 74 percent of Americans indicated that gas-powered cars are better for driving more than 250 miles, which currently is the upper range limit for drivers to access public charging stations.

Charging Ahead

To overcome the EV charging station hurdle, the U.S. federal government is investing \$5 billion in the National Electric



Rhode Island Senator Lou DiPalma speaks at a 2023 CSG East Panel.

Vehicle Infrastructure program (NEVI) to create a national network of high-speed EV chargers along major highways and interstates. All 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico are participating in the NEVI program, and the first two years of funding alone will electrify over 75,000 miles of the national highway system. Additionally, the government of Canada is more than halfway to its goal of supporting the installation of 84,500 EV chargers by 2029.

During the Toronto Annual Meeting, the Canadian Standards Association's Jordann Thirgood spoke of the critical role policymakers should take to ensure equity and reliability in the rollout of EV charging stations. During her presentation, she discussed key EV charging station deployment issues. These include location, physical design of charging ports incorporating accessible design practices, energy grid load reliability and capacity, and multiple payment options.

As motor vehicle manufacturers continue to invest significantly in EVs and the total cost of EV ownership reaches parity with gas-powered vehicles, the pressure on all levels of government to support a reliable EV charging network will intensify. More than that, policymakers will continue to grapple with a delicate balancing act between the promotion and adoption of all-electric vehicles and the responsibility of funding, maintaining, and building our nation's transportation infrastructure. ■

As HBCU Funding Gaps Come to the Forefront, Leaders Call for Urgent Action

BY CHARLES D. ELLISON



Credit: Delaware State University

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are a total of 99 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States, including the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia. While nearly half of them are designated private institutions, the other 50 are public institutions. These 50 schools — a slim majority — are state-funded, state-managed, and state-regulated. So how are states doing, and how are these HBCUs faring under state management?

It is an important time to ask these questions, especially considering the rising popularity of HBCUs. HBCUs — scattered across just 19 states, mostly in the South — are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of students getting accepted and enrolling. While overall undergraduate enrollment declined during the pandemic, HCBU enrollment spiked substantially (30 percent), with some estimates showing an increase as high as nearly 60 percent. Policymakers must pay close attention to these trends in terms of what it means for these state institutions and state government commitments to them, especially given complex histories of enslavement, segregation, and racialization. Increases in HBCU enrollment will also continue to accelerate as Black communities worry about higher education access and financing in the wake of the recent Supreme Court decision dismantling affirmative action.

Renewed concerns around funding recently came to the forefront as the U.S. Department of Education presented

fresh data exposing the underfunding of a specific class of important HBCUs known as “1890 land grant universities.” These 19 schools currently exist in 18 states — including CSG East member states Delaware and Maryland — and are some of the most well-known, established, and prestigious HBCUs.

History is important here. Land grant colleges were created initially in 1862 by the first Morrill Act, and those schools went on to become some of the most prestigious public universities in the nation (think Ohio State, Penn State, Rutgers, and even Cornell). However, in the years following the Civil War and Reconstruction, it became clear that race was a strong factor in admissions, denying many Black students — many of whom were only a generation removed from slavery or were formerly enslaved themselves — an equal opportunity in higher learning. Ultimately, Congress passed the second Morrill Act in 1890, which required either that race no longer be a factor in admissions at the original 1862 schools or that new land-grant schools be created for Black students. In the South, states opted almost exclusively to create new schools rather than fully integrate existing land-grant colleges. But those new 1890 schools also prevailed, due to the federal commitment to the land-grant program and the requirements that states uphold their end of the bargain too, matching federal funding dollar for dollar.

However, over the past 30 years, federal data show 1890

HBCUs have been underfunded by states by more than \$13 billion. A series of letters from Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack noted underfunding by all states except for Delaware and Ohio. Yet, even where states are meeting the 1:1 match, no state is going beyond that, and funding remains visibly inequitable between predominantly Black 1890s and predominantly white 1862s.

State and federal officials are becoming increasingly aware of the problem, and many are taking action. Senators Sherrod Brown (Ohio) and Raphael Warnock (Georgia), and Representatives Alma Adams (North Carolina) and Marilyn Strickland (Washington) together introduced a land grant equity and accountability act that would push states to provide a “fair share” of funding for 1890s.

“State legislators across the country need to make funding our historically Black colleges and universities a priority,” Maryland Delegate Karen Toles said in an interview. “As a professor at an HBCU, I see first-hand how important that is.”

HBCUs are economic and workforce development powerhouses. According to the UNCF: United Negro College Fund, they generate an estimated \$15 billion in economic activity annually, and are responsible for the production of nearly 140,000 jobs. Additionally, each graduating class of HBCU students can expect an average \$130 billion in lifetime earnings, with each graduate bringing in roughly \$1 million in added lifetime income with an HBCU degree. As a recent Century Foundation report shows, the 1890 HBCUs by themselves generate nearly \$6 billion in annual economic impact while providing “\$52 billion in lifetime earnings for each graduating class.”

Out of the many programs and institutions states are asked to fund, HBCUs stand out as a quality investment generating huge returns in economic activity, jobs created, and GDP. Now, as enrollments grow, inequities are addressed, and the landscape in higher education continues to shift, state leaders will need to ask hard questions about the funding of public HBCUs in their respective states and make critical decisions about how to chart a way forward. The recent Supreme Court ruling is expected to further drive non-white populations — particularly Black populations — into non-white institutions, and state policymakers will need to be mindful of this before federal scrutiny turns into further action or, as is the case in states like Florida and Tennessee, students in 1890 schools seek legal counsel to sue states for underfunding.

“Affirmative action leveled the playing field at predomi-



Credit: Nokomis O'Brien

Maryland Delegate Karen Toles speaks at the 2023 CSG East Annual Meeting in Toronto.

nantly white institutions, and since that mandate is now undone, it’s now more critical than ever to properly fund our HBCUs at the highest level,” Delegate Toles added. “Adequately funding our HBCUs in the State of Maryland has been a top priority for Black legislators and I know that will continue in the upcoming 2024 legislative session.”

Debates over how to provide educational opportunities to all Americans have run parallel to every major era of American history. From the first public schools to debates over segregation and now funding equity, the American public has planted the seeds for our future by making important decisions at crucial junctures in our history. CSG East and its Council on Communities of Color will continue to follow the issue of funding equity in higher education, especially at HBCUs, and will, as always, deliver state leaders the information they need to ask the right questions and move their states forward. ■

“State legislators across the country need to make funding our historically Black colleges and universities a priority. As a professor at an HBCU, I see first-hand how important that is.”

– Maryland Delegate Karen Toles

CSG East Summit Explores Options for Overcoming Farm Labor Shortages

BY TARA SAD



Every decade of American history has brought new agricultural technologies to make farming more efficient, productive, and profitable, but it still takes countless thousands of workers to harvest crops, tend livestock, and care for America's farmlands.

Today, farmers are facing a labor shortage that is persistent and threatens to leave crops rotting in the fields, drive prices up, and put some farmers out of business altogether.

"Our country is facing growing agriculture workforce challenges that jeopardize our farmers' ability to be competitive, threatens the resiliency, abundance, and safety of our food system, and has repercussions on our overall economy," U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a September 2023 press release.

CSG East Regional Summit

On April 28-29, members of the CSG East Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Committee gathered in Baltimore, Maryland, for a summit to discuss policy options for overcoming challenges related to labor shortages in the farm and food processing sectors.

Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks led with a presentation on the hurdles states face attracting documented workers to fill the many open agricultural

positions in Maryland and other states in the region. One of the challenges is that farm worker visa programs are temporary and seasonal, with the maximum stay capped at five months. These programs do not work for dairy farmers, who need workers to help milk their cows year-round.

Temporary worker programs are challenging for growers as well. Jon Huntington of Pleasant View Gardens in Loudon, New Hampshire, which grows flowers and ornamentals, said he has trouble finding the 350 workers he needs each season.

Laura Tramontana, the national monitor advocate within the U.S. Department of Labor, helps to find workers for temporary agricultural jobs, including those working under the H-2A visa program. Tramontana liaises with farmworker organizations, agricultural employers, and enforcement agencies, and recommends policy changes and advocates for improved services. She shared the work the department does to ensure that migrant and seasonal farmworkers have equitable access to career services, skill development, and workforce protections.

While some states have passed legislation that protects farmworkers from abuse — including mandating overtime pay and prohibiting substandard housing — participants agreed that without changes to our existing labor and

immigration laws, farmers will continue to struggle to find workers to harvest and process their crops and animals.

Conversation on potential solutions mostly focused on federal action, especially leading up to congressional consideration of agricultural issues wrapped up in the next farm bill.

The U.S. House of Representatives twice passed the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, first proposed in 2019, which would have changed the existing immigration and visa laws to allow for year-round labor and a pathway to citizenship for those farmworkers already in the country and working. That legislation stalled in December 2022, when an attempt to add it to the omnibus package failed, and the bill expired at year's end. A 2023 version of the bill was reintroduced in late June and is still awaiting action.

CSG East's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Committee will continue to monitor issues around workforce development in the farm and food processing sectors, and keep members informed of policy developments. ■



Credit: Tara Sada

New CSG East Agriculture and Rural Affairs co-chair Brian Pettyjohn speaks at the 2023 Ag Labor Summit.

Learning to Read, continued from page 7

and weekend programs. Programs may be more effective when they take place within the traditional academic year, but summer programs are more successful than weekend programs.

Expanded learning time, such as after-school and summer programs — when applied alongside regular classroom instruction — can help mitigate learning loss.

Out-of-school-time programs are more effective when instructors are educators, but instructors who are provided with pedagogical training can be similarly effective. Summer programs are most effective when they last at least five weeks and include at least three hours of instruction per day.

Tutoring

Tutoring is a strategy used by many schools throughout the states. The most effective tutoring programs are built on small group instruction. The smaller groups allow the tutor to focus more intently on the student. Similarly, small groups that focus on a similar topic over a period of time tend to yield positive results.

Tutors can be teachers, paraeducators, parents, volunteers, or even peers. One study indicates that the programs with the most beneficial outcomes are implemented in earlier grade levels and include teachers or paraeducators as tutors. The Regional Educational Laboratory West reports that tutoring is most effective at school, during the school day, in three or more sessions per week lasting at least 30 minutes.

Conclusion

While school and government leaders assess different strategies to improve literacy outcomes, they all will be keeping a close eye on test scores and other indicators. The ability to read and write has more implications than just academic success — these skills are foundational to participation in the workforce, democracy, and society in general.

Like many leaders and legislators, Campion hopes to give students the skills not only to thrive in their own personal lives, but also to benefit the future of the country. “If you want to be a mechanic, or go into the trades, or even be an active participant in our democracy, you need to have solid literacy skills,” says Campion, “you need to be able to read and write.” ■

Regional Leaders Race to Meet PFAS Challenges

BY DYLAN MCDOWELL



Credit: Shutterstock

When Fred Stone, a dairy farmer in Maine, learned that the water on his farm contained “forever chemicals” at nearly twice the level recently recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, he knew he had a problem.

Broadly speaking, chemical spills happen frequently enough in the United States that there are tools and action plans written for most of them. When crude oil leaks out into the ocean or covers a coastal area, for example, most Americans can call to mind scenes ranging from past cleanups in the Gulf of Mexico to oil-covered birds in dish soap advertisements. When latex polymer was spilled north of Philadelphia this spring, the city water department issued advisories and residents were able to mostly wait it out while the Delaware River pushed the spill out to sea.

But this new class of chemicals — known as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) — is different. PFAS covers a large class of thousands of synthetic chemicals that do not break down in the environment, hence the name “forever chemicals,” some of which are potentially dangerous at very low levels (measured in parts per trillion).

In Maine, Stone wasn’t just forced to stop selling milk, he ultimately had to euthanize most of his herd of dairy cattle. He later learned that the PFAS contamination stemmed from the spreading of municipal sludge back in 1986. Worse still, according to State Representative Lori

Gramlich, Potter and his family “have been plagued with health problems ever since.”

“We heard so many heartbreaking stories from impacted farmers and rural communities about the effect that PFAS contamination has had on their livelihoods and the health of their families,” Gramlich wrote in a *Press Herald* opinion piece earlier this year. “We knew we had to take action to reduce the source of contamination and protect the health of all Mainers.”

While the authorities who oversaw the sludge problem back in 1986 couldn’t have known it, they were introducing chemicals into the groundwater that will not degrade and are nearly impossible to clean up, even today.

But leaders have more information at their hands, with important research on PFAS being published at breakneck speed since the first studies were conducted by PFAS manufacturers like 3M and DuPont in the late 1990s.

What they do with this emerging research is the subject of ongoing CSG East policy meetings and regional calls, where state leaders and experts are coming together to set the agenda for state-level action in the months and years to come.

“A Perfect storm”

PFAS exposure is worst in “hot spots” around the country, most of which are either near manufacturing sites, waste-

water facilities, landfills, or airports and airbases, where the most effective firefighting foams (Aqueous Film-Forming Foam/AFFFs) needed to put out jet fuel fires have had PFAS in them since at least the 1970s.

But the chemicals can be found just about everywhere else, too. Since they don't break down naturally and tend to build up in human bodies over time, trace amounts of legacy PFAS chemicals like PFOA and PFOS — two of the first compounds to be widely applied for industrial and consumer use — can be found in the blood of nearly every human being on Earth.

While research exploring the health effects of PFAS exposure is ongoing, early results have linked PFAS exposure to increased cholesterol, decreased vaccine efficacy, changes in liver enzymes, low birth weight, and increased incidence of testicular and kidney cancer, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

States Act

So — what to do with a chemical that is hard to detect, accumulates in the body, can survive in the environment indefinitely, is potentially harmful, and is already in the blood of 97% of Americans and Canadians?

“Research, restrict, remediate,” say officials at the EPA in their 2021-2024 PFAS Strategic Roadmap, which highlights plans to publish a national testing strategy, restrict the use of certain PFAS chemicals, enhance reporting requirements, undertake drinking water monitoring, and other ongoing projects. The infrastructure bill passed in 2021 also included \$10 billion to “combat PFAS contamination.”

But things take time at the federal level — time that not all state leaders feel they have. Living and working closer to the constituents and communities affected by PFAS contamination, state leaders like Rep. Terri Cortvriend aren't waiting around.

“Every day, we learn more about the pervasiveness of PFAS in our environment and ourselves, and about its dangers,” said Cortvriend in a *Providence Journal* op-ed co-authored with Rhode Island Rep. June Speakman last year. “The extent of contamination is not fully known, as this is a large family of chemicals — several thousand — that have not been routinely monitored. What we know for sure is that we need legislation to control the introduction of these chemicals into our water and soil by using products that don't contain them. And we must set a contaminant limit — we propose 20 parts per trillion — so



“We knew we had to take action to reduce the source of contamination and protect the health of all Mainers.”

**– Maine State Representative
Lori Gramlich**

water suppliers and well owners can test their water against it, and immediately remediate if necessary.”

In Maine — the first state to pass a more comprehensive ban on non-essential PFAS products — focusing on how PFAS chemicals enter Maine and stopping them upstream has put the Pine Tree State at the vanguard of states looking to set a plan to regulate PFAS sooner rather than later.

As of September, 25 states have adopted 131 policies to address various aspects of PFAS, according to environmental advocacy group Safer States. At least 33 states have introduced about 200 new PFAS policies or laws in 2023 alone.

Summary

Just a few decades after products like Teflon were hailed as a miracle of chemistry, researchers and legislators alike are left wondering what hidden costs these revolutionary products came with, and how long they will take to address. Further still, early adopters of PFAS legislation are now tasked with enforcing reporting requirements, approving essential-use exemptions, and otherwise implementing the multi-year processes set up by their new laws.

As state leaders continue to address the issue, CSG East is working to drive collaboration and build consensus through regular policy meetings and exchanges.

If you would like to join regional calls and meetings on PFAS-related issues, email us at info-east@csg.org. Members and staff are currently planning a summit for April 2024. Details will be shared via email list and at csg-erc.org when available. ■

E A S T E R N L E A D E R S H I P

Sharpen Your Skills

The Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) offers officials and staff from all three branches of state and provincial government a unique opportunity to hone their leadership and communication skills and network with colleagues from the Eastern Region.

Held annually in Philadelphia, and working in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government, the unique five-day program includes workshops and hands-on training with experts from academia as well as the public and private sectors. ELA offers strategies tailored to the challenges facing public officials every day in areas including resolving conflicts, fostering civil discourse, and mastering social media and branding, in a focused setting that promotes experiential learning.

ELA is designed to help members:

- **Develop leadership skills.** Through a series of hands-on group workshops ranging from consensus building to media relations, ELA provides training to sharpen and develop the skills needed to become an effective leader.
- **Improve understanding of key regional issues.** ELA is the only leadership academy designed exclusively for Eastern regional officials from all three branches. Scholars from the Fels Institute of Government and outside experts provide a context for participants to effectively evaluate information, communicate successfully with constituents and colleagues, and develop strategies for relating to the media and the public.
- **Network with the best and brightest.** ELA convenes some of the most promising state officials from across the region to share knowledge and to learn from one another's experiences. ■



2023 Eastern Leadership Academy fellows at closing reception.

Credit: Nekomis O'Brien

Here is what recent graduates are saying about ELA:

"ELA has given me the skills to make sure I put the values that brought me into public service into everyday practice."

- **Representative David LeBoeuf, Massachusetts**

"This program created a safe and welcoming learning environment where you gain valuable skills while sharing and contributing your perspectives to the larger group. You truly connect with the other ELA members and build friendships."

- **MPP Doly Begum, Ontario**

"ELA was a truly transformative experience. I will take the lessons I learned and the relationships I formed at ELA with me every day to ensure I am growing myself and my team."

- **Laura Wisniewski, Chief of Staff, House Majority Caucus, Delaware**

"The ELA has been an invaluable experience. Although each of our states are unique, we share many of the same issues and concerns. Hearing ideas, best practices and feedback from colleagues in other states has been extremely helpful and invigorating. I also made some really great friends!"

- **Emily Martineau, Deputy Director, Communications, Office of the Speaker, Rhode Island**

"I had heard from other ELA Fellows how wonderful it was to spend time and meet their peers from other states but it's impossible to really understand it until you go through the program."

- **Jon Patterson, Policy Analyst, House Majority Caucus, Delaware**

From the 2023 ELA Class President: April Ashe

Life has a funny way of coming full circle. I can remember watching my mom get dressed — she'd put on her fine linens and powder her nose with Oscar de la Renta, and out the door her heels would take her to the Pennsylvania State Capitol — a building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania that I only dreamed of working in. As a child, I knew that inside that majestic building were countless people, long crowded hallways, and a powerful sense of change.

I knew I wanted to be a part of it. Everything done there is in service to others. There's a pace and pressure that comes with working in the public sphere that's exciting, but it's also true that there's not always time to pause, breathe, and grow. Taking time to rest and build one's skills cultivates better working environments, helps facilitate harmonized conversations, and improves leaders' ability to govern and build policy that serves the collective good. That's exactly what joining this year's Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) did for me. Getting the time to meet other public servants and practice the skills I use every day in the Pennsylvania legislature has given me something else, too: a chance to reflect on my own story.

I grew up in Harrisburg, and although it's a small town — approximately 50,000 in population — it never felt like that to me. As a kid, my imagination was big. I was in pageants and modeling for a time, but never fully took to it. I constantly read and spent most of my time imagining myself as a teacher, traveling and always helping just like my father. My father was a truck driver and business owner, always working hard. I can recall driving in the dark to empty dirt lots, with no idea at that time that this land of dirt was deeply intertwined with my family history. Only later would I learn of the selflessness of my great-grandfather and the vision he held.

My great-grandfather Elmo Hodge was not only one of the prominent farmers in Harrisburg during the mid-1950s, but he also had a vision to develop custom-built homes marketed to Black and Brown families working toward the American Dream. Watching my father build his home within the very neighborhood my great-grandfather imagined, designed, and built, I got my first taste of servant leadership and how working for the greater good can create generational wealth and help so many live a better life.

Servant leadership is not something you choose. It chooses you — a concept I believe

everyone can get behind, even if we have different ways to approach the solution.

As a college freshman at Clarion University, I interned for the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus during summer break. I learned the importance of a collective voice. I watched members discuss various pieces of legislation, and I saw how the strongest voices in the room could channel their own stories and the perspectives of the communities they served to change the trajectory of a law being passed. It was democracy at its most tangible, most inspiring! I saw the same kind of servant leadership there that my family had embraced just a few neighborhoods over, generations ago, and I knew that I could play a role here, too.



Credit: Nekomis O'Brien

But the skills needed to be a good leader don't come without putting in the work. CSG East has been a key component within the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for as long as I can remember. Beginning my tenure as a legislative assistant in August of 2019, I remember reading some of the material CSG representatives had dropped off. I read through the services they could provide and some of the programs they were running at the time on accessible health care, voter registration, and equipping leaders with tools for bridging the partisan divide. Little did I know, flipping past a page on ELA, that I would be attending this program years later as an executive director, and my perspective on government would change forever.

The challenges we face as public servants echoed in every room we entered at ELA. From dawn until late in the evening, we'd have long, honest, deep conversations about inadequate funding sources and addressing the needs of those we do not have a close relationship with, trauma left behind by COVID-19, and residents battling inadequate

health care systems and increasingly dangerous climate disasters. How do we, who see these problems first-hand, find solutions? Can we find commonalities and build consensus rather than cling only to our own desired goals?

And it kept going from there: conversations of self-care and taking moments to breathe are skills I cherish and I enjoyed talking about with other ELA fellows. We talked repeatedly about how we can work together better from both sides of the aisle to engage in fruitful conversations, respecting each other's point of view to find political common ground. Trainings on social media management, a session on inclusion and microaggressions, and so many other parts of this program were approached with thoughtfulness and consideration from the facilitators and every member of our class.

The Academy's best feature, for me, was sharing perspectives, passions, concerns, and challenges from one state, province, and territory to another. I learned so much from the other fellows, who came from jurisdictions as far away as Nova Scotia and Puerto Rico to take part in the program.

ELA helped me to remember my great-grandfather's vision to empower others and provide them the knowledge and support they need to access the American Dream. We all need that kind of support in today's climate, where many impassés are evident, and ELA showed how effectively we can provide it to each other. It brought everything I have seen, lived, and come to love full circle, reminding me that public service is a cultivation of relationships, collectively working toward a common goal for the betterment of others.

I look forward to learning more and engaging more through applying what I learned at ELA. There's so much I'm taking home with me that will help me build a culture of excellence, forge a bridge between members and their communities, draft better policy, and identify the core concerns behind our greatest challenges. I am a firm believer that these things are possible, and that dedicated public servants are in and of themselves a solution to the challenges we face.

Now, heading back to that same ornate building and those same long hallways I would watch my mom navigate every day, I feel more prepared than ever to become that person, reach those goals, and dive back into the work of building a better future for us all.

April V. Ashe

THE 2023 CSG EAST ANNUAL MEETING *See the Other Side*

In late August 2023, CSG East held its 62nd Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, hosted by the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Hundreds of members from the states, territories, and provinces that make up the Eastern Region made their way to Toronto for a four-day meeting featuring important policy conversations, presentations, and networking opportunities.

We want to extend a special thanks to this year's co-chairs, Speaker Ted Arnott and MPP Jamie West, for

their hospitality, along with all of the staff from the Ontario Legislature who worked tirelessly to make this meeting special for members and guests alike. Thanks also to our sponsors, speakers, and attendees — from old friends to new faces, your support is what makes this meeting such a vibrant place to exchange ideas and meet peers across the many borders that make up our region's 18 jurisdictions. ■



Marie Gaudet of Wikwemikong First Nation on Manitoulin Island performs at the opening event.



2023 Co-Chair MPP Jamie West poses for a photo with Harnarayan Singh, hockey announcer and closing plenary speaker.



New York Senator Gustavo Rivera leads a tour of an overdose prevention center in Toronto.



Officers of the Legislative Protective Service Honour Guard open the 2023 Annual Meeting.

Finding the Path Forward with Tanya Talaga

Setting the right tone at the beginning of any meeting is important, something that our Canadian hosts in Ontario understand well. American members attending the 2023 Annual Meeting might have been surprised by the frequency with which Canadians of all backgrounds will begin a meeting or remarks with a land acknowledgement — a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples as traditional stewards of the land — but Canadians have been doing these acknowledgements for years.

In Toronto, the most common land acknowledgement recognizes that Toronto is “within the traditional territory of many nations including the Anishinaabe, the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples.”

Speaking at the Executive Committee luncheon during the first day of the meeting, Tanya Talaga — an award-winning Anishnaabe journalist and author — shed some light on how these acknowledgements fit into a longer narrative of First Nations peoples in Canada and the long fight to recognize the unjust treatment of Indigenous people.

Tanya Talaga’s mother is from Fort William First Nation, near Thunder Bay, Ontario, in the west of the province and her father is Polish. Her family history tells a tale of generations of abuse: a great-great grandmother buried in an unmarked grave, great-grandparents who survived residential schools, and three uncles taken as part of “the Sixties Scoop,” one of whom didn’t return.

“You always need to know who’s telling the story,” she said, adding that her family and their experiences inform all of her writing, and that hearing directly from Indigenous voices is the only way to engage with this history.

Talaga is a journalist now working with Canada’s national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, and has written about Indigenous issues in the country, including in her best-selling book *Seven Fallen Feathers*.

At the CSG East meeting, Talaga shared how the Seven Grandfather Teachings, a set of Anishinaabe guiding principles on how to lead a good life, can also be used to teach us how to live together on this continent today.

“The teachings should be defining what a good life is for all who live here now,” she said. “To know them all is to know the truth. Without these teachings we would be lost, we would be rudderless. But through them, we can lead a good life, a life of service, of strong families and strong communities.”



Credit: Nohemi O'Brien

Tanya Talaga addresses 2023 annual meeting at opening plenary luncheon.

Talaga shared the story of a friend, Dr. Mike Kirlew, who she felt embodied the teaching of wisdom.

Kirlew found himself in Sioux Lookout for his residency after medical school. Upon arriving in the remote northwestern city, he was given a tour and shown two separate hospitals. One was for Indigenous patients, and the other was for everyone else. Originally built to handle outbreaks of tuberculosis, these “Indian Hospitals” morphed into nightmarish places where Indigenous children and adults were given inferior care and sometimes even experimented on. By the time that Kirlew arrived in Sioux Lookout, the Indigenous hospital was still in operation. In the dilapidated “Zone Hospital,” 75 Indigenous patients were attended to by one nurse. He compared its conditions to those seen in South Africa during the apartheid.

“Dr. Kirlew has seen the discrepancies between the haves and the have nots” Talaga said.

She went on to say that our current policies create otherness and separation not only within our healthcare system but in all aspects of life. The problems that Kirlew encountered in Sioux Lookout echo the inequities faced by many different ethnic and racial minorities in every corner of the continent, Talaga said, drawing comparisons to how Indigenous peoples, enslaved people, and others were treated in the United States and how many people continue to be othered and ostracized today.

“How do we get to the root?” asked Talaga. “We can’t just patch up the problems. You need to get to the base.” Along with honoring the treaties that built these countries, she said, leaders must be honest about facing the past and be inclusive in their approach to building the future. She

also identified education reform as a critical part of moving forward, saying that teaching children the hard truths of our shared history is the best way to create a generation who knows the truth and can create a better future.

Investment in “Getting it Right from the Start” of the Utmost Importance

During the first policy session of the 2023 Annual Meeting, panelists joining the Education and Workforce Development committee put a spotlight on the urgent need to address issues in early childhood education.

Top priorities included the need for funding, early childhood educator retention, and the importance of collecting robust data to track program achievements.

Senator Alison Clarkson, majority leader from Vermont, highlighted the impact of COVID-19 in uncovering the precarious state of early childhood education in the United States and Canada. Funding and labor shortages, she said, would require a multifaceted approach to solve and demand active conversation and collaboration among policymakers, providers, and parents.

Clarkson explained that compensation was proving particularly difficult to solve, further exacerbating recruitment and retention challenges.

That sentiment was echoed by Ontario’s Assistant Deputy Minister of Early Years and Childcare Holly Moran, who outlined the early childhood education approaches in Ontario, including licensing and career pathway policies in the province. Moran underlined the importance of compensation, saying that Ontario is the only province to regulate early childhood education as an occupation and is working hard to set higher compensation and open up more spaces using targeted government funding.



“We should spend more on childhood education. That gets children started on the right foot.”

– Vermont Senator Alison Clarkson, in the *Mountain Times*

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, leaders like Senator Donna Frett-Gregory have looked at solving these challenges through more robust recruitment. She described efforts to increase recruitment of international candidates to help address labor shortages in the field, especially from nearby Caribbean nations and the Philippines.

Frett-Gregory also emphasized the importance of early childhood education in identifying learning disabilities and cognitive and behavioral challenges, explaining that early intervention and support can help students succeed in their academic careers.

Attention to tracking students as early as possible was shared by Assistant Deputy Minister Moran, who also highlighted the need for accurate and longitudinal data to ensure that policies are meeting success metrics.

Wrapping up the panel discussion, Senator Clarkson stressed the need for all stakeholders to contribute to solutions — families, communities, local government, and the private sector each have a crucial role in constructing a comprehensive and effective childhood education system.

While the current landscape was challenging, panelists agreed, investments into early education continue to pay major, long-term dividends in social benefit, including improvements in K-12 academic performance, lower incarceration rates, and more pathways out of poverty.

The CSG East Education and Workforce Development Committee will continue to report on early childhood education, which was a top issue in every Eastern jurisdiction in 2023. Email us your questions and comments by contacting policy analyst Andrew Johnson at ajohnson@csg.org. ■



MLA Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin participates in a policy session at the 2023 CSG East Annual Meeting.



Maryland Delegate Stephanie Smith asks a question at opening plenary luncheon with Tanya Talaga.



New York Assembly member Mike Benedetto accepting the 2023 Paul White State and Regional Leadership Award.



Nora Young interviews Anton Korinek and Tony Gaffney at the AI plenary luncheon.



Connecticut Representative Geraldo Reyes and Maine Representative Maggie O'Neil at the 2023 Annual Meeting.



2023 Co-Chairs Speaker Ted Arnett and MPP Jamie West pose with Director David Biette at closing dinner.



Credit: Nokomis O'Brien

New Reports Highlight Importance of International Trade in Regional Economy

Tim Tierney reports to CSG East Executive Committee.



According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, more than 24 million shipping containers arrive at U.S. ports and border crossings each year by land and sea. What you may not know is that much of what comes and goes by ship, rail, and truck routes is the result of negotiations and trade missions that began in state trade development offices.

In state offices around the country, trade directors seek to connect local small businesses with every possible opportunity to

export goods and services or connect with business partners abroad.

But only in the eastern region do those directors convene regularly with regional peers to collaborate on grant strategies, jointly attend trade shows, and share best practices.

Since 1999, the CSG East Eastern Trade Council (ETC) has facilitated cooperation among the 10 northeastern states in export development.

This year, the ETC board commissioned reports to help

shed some light on the work they do, and how important it is to our regional economies.

“The trade reports furnished by Eastern Trade Council are critical for my department,” said Tim Tierney, director of business recruitment and international trade for Vermont and vice-chair of the Eastern Trade Council. “Not only do these reports extoll the importance of trade and foreign investment to our state’s economy and workforce, they also serve as concise snapshots for supporting institutions, such as state legislatures and trade partners.”

The reports show export activity by state, including total export value, top trade partners, and the number of jobs supported by trade activity in each state. Building on previous reports, this year’s snapshots also included data on trade in services.

Some obvious similarities jump off the page. Canada continues to be the top trade partner for every state in the region. Regional hospitals and universities continue to be important drivers of local economies. High-tech companies in pharmaceuticals, aerospace, and other high-tech industries continue to drive billions in sales.

But interesting differences are made clear, too, like how semiconductors play an outsized role in Vermont’s economy, or how one-fifth of all U.S. sugar and confectionary exports originate in Pennsylvania.

The full portfolio of reports can be viewed on the CSG East website. ■



Save the Date



EAST



The Council of State Governments · Eastern Regional Conference
63rd Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum
Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel · Baltimore, Maryland · July 28–31, 2024



Credit: Christopher Becke



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