

## **Board of Early Education and Care**

**April 10, 2024**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**303 Homestead Avenue,**

**Holyoke, MA 01040**

**Frost Building, Room 265**

<https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass>

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### **Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present**

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Commissioner

Paul Belsito, Chair

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, Vice-Chair

Nicki Ruiz de Luzuriaga (via phone)

Linda D. Sagor, M.D., M.P.H.

Jamella Lee (via phone)

Cheryl Travers

Carolyn Kain, J.D., Designee for HHS Secretary Kate Walsh

### **Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Not Present**

Stephanie M. Curenton, Ph.D.

George K. Atanasov

### **Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chair Belsito provided opening remarks. Chair Belsito welcomed Kimberly Quinlan, Director of Early Childhood Grant Initiatives at Holyoke Community College. Ms. Quinlan welcomed the Board and discussed the mission of Holyoke Community College and their initiatives to support students, parents, and the early childhood workforce. Chair Belsito thanked Ms. Quinlan for her leadership.

### **Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler thanked Holyoke Community College for their hospitality. Secretary Tutwiler provided an update regarding Governor Healey's Gateway to Pre-K agenda, the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative Grant Program, and the Child Care Task Force. Secretary Tutwiler recognized the four-year anniversary of the 9:30 call coordinated by Strategies for Children.

### **Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Kershaw thanked Holyoke Community College and acknowledged their Child Watch program as a model for colleges in the Commonwealth. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the Request for Proposals for Child Care Financial Assistance. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the Early Education and Care apprenticeship program, and Co-Chair

Moeller discussed a recent meeting held with the Executive Office of Workforce and Labor Development (EOWLD) and the apprenticeship programs. Commissioner Kershaw provided a staffing update. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the budget process. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the meeting agenda and provided information regarding the May Board meeting. Commissioner Kershaw shared that Board Member Curenton's tenure on the Board will end after the May Board meeting.

### **Statements from the Public**

Chair Belsito acknowledged that public comment received by email was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting.

Amanda Lopes from UMass Boston's Institute of Early Education Leadership and Innovation provided public comment to advocate for EEC's ongoing investments in continuous quality and leadership improvement and shared how those investments have benefited early educators at UMass Boston.

Barbara Black, North Hampton Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) Program, provided public comment in support of CPPI grant funding and the mixed delivery system. She shared how the grant funding has benefited her work and discussed positive next steps needed for the program.

Theresa Lock, Implementation Specialist Coach from the University of Florida, shared her experience working as part of the Early Childhood Support Organization (ECSO) Initiative, which provides leadership skills to programs in Massachusetts.

Lisa Martin, Owner/Director of Side-by-Side Preschool in Chicopee, and Rebecca Storozuk, Director at Prelude Preschool of the Arts at Community Music School of Springfield, shared their experiences working with the coaching initiative.

Desiree Lalbeharie-Josias, Director of the Early Childhood Department at the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES), provided public comment in support of funding increases for mental health services at EEC-licensed programs and advocated increased funding for Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) programs. She shared feedback from families who participate in CFCE programs and how the CFCE programs benefit these families.

Michelle Mens, Coordinator for CFCE Services at the Collaborative for Educational Services, discussed her program, the services they provide, and the communities they serve. She shared feedback from parents who participate in the program and encouraged the Board to continue to support CFCE.

Rosemary Montero Hernandez, Associate Director for Family Childcare Systems at Clarendon Early Education Services, provided public comment in support of family child care systems and shared an anecdote about a family child care provider and a family who benefited from participating in a family child care system. She encouraged the Board to continue to support family child care systems.

Donna Denette, Executive Director of the Children's First Center in Granby, provided public comment to advocate for support of the early child care workforce.

Anat Weisenfreund, Director of Head Start and Early Learning Programs for Community Action Pioneer Valley and President of Association for Infant Mental Health, provided public comment in support of the

Request for Proposal and to thank EEC for their leadership to support children, families, and the workforce.

**Routine Business:**

- Approval of Minutes from March 13, 2024 Meeting – VOTE
  - Approved unanimously with Board Members Travers and Kain abstaining.

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

- Executive Order 625: Establishing an Inter-Agency Task Force on Ensuring Affordable, High-Quality Child Care

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Mark Reilly, Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Executive Office of Education. Undersecretary Reilly introduced himself and provided an overview of his work experience in state government. Undersecretary Reilly provided an overview of Governor Healey’s recent Executive Order 625: Establishing an Inter-Agency Task Force on Ensuring Affordable, High-Quality Childcare. Undersecretary Reilly detailed the Interagency Task Force’s priorities and discussed the values that the Task Force will use to guide their work. Undersecretary Reilly outlined projected milestones, their corresponding deliverables, and next steps for the Task Force. Undersecretary Reilly highlighted that additional information will be shared on the Task Force website through [mass.gov](https://mass.gov).

Chair Belsito, Co-Chair Moeller, and Board Member Sagor provided comments in support of the Task Force, and Commissioner Kershaw emphasized the need for partnerships to leverage results.

- EEC Workforce Development Updates

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed a partner panel including Kimberly Quinlan-Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at Holyoke Community College, Dawn DiStefano-President & CEO of Square One, Wendy Colon-Director of King St. Preschool, Square One and Irza Bigaz Melendez-Classroom Coordinator Itsy Bitsy Child Watch Holyoke Community College to discuss their collaborative efforts to support workforce development. Ms. Quinlan provided an overview of how Holyoke Community College Education Faculty, Career Pathways, and Professional Development Centers collaborate with community partners to support educators, improve program quality, and recruit workers. Ms. DiStefano discussed Square One’s pilot mentor program and how they have partnered with Holyoke Community College to develop support for educators and apprentices. Ms. Colon shared highlights of her experience in the mentor training program. Ms. Quinlan shared how key components of the mentor training pilot program evolved and which components are necessary to replicate the program. Ms. Bigaz Melendez shared her journey to become an early childhood educator and her experience working as the Classroom Coordinator at Itsy Bitsy Child Watch at Holyoke Community College. She shared how she benefits from career coaching through the Professional Development Center.

Commissioner Kershaw and Chair Belsito thanked the panel for sharing their on-the-ground experience. Board Members Curenton, Sagor, and Moeller provided comments in support of the panel comments. Chair Belsito thanked Ms. Quinlan for her leadership and participation.

- EEC Learning Management System (LMS)

Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Support discussed current workforce efforts and outlined strategic initiatives. She provided an overview of the StrongStart Learning Management System. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an update regarding the EEC Essentials courses.

- Supportive Pathways

Sarah Volkenant, Director of Program Innovation and Supports, discussed EEC's efforts to support the workforce pipeline. Ms. Volkenant discussed how apprenticeship programs provide supported pathways into the early education field. She shared future investments EEC is supporting to expand and accelerate access to workforce programs. Board Member Lee and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed efforts to attract educators to the early education field.

- Higher Education Opportunities

Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed efforts to improve Higher Education opportunities, highlighting the Career Pathways Grant. Deputy Commissioner Bowne detailed proposed updates to the ECE scholarship and Commissioner Kershaw recognized the collaboration with the Department of Higher Education to maximize funding. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed EEC's efforts to build systemic collaboration and alignment and provided an update on efforts to define career pathways and a credentialing system. She outlined next steps planned for the credential pathway. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the important role of educational leadership to support educator success in a competency-based credential system. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an update regarding optional certifications through EEC's Teacher Qualification Unit.

Chair Belsito provided closing remarks.

Meeting concluded at 3:30PM.