

Board of Early Education and Care
April 8, 2026
1:30PM – 4:30PM
Department of Early Education and Care, Central Office
50 Milk Street, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02109
<https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass>

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

Dr. Stephen Zrike, Secretary of Education
Amy Kershaw, Commissioner
Paul Belsito, Chair
Dr. Kimberly D. Lucas
Jennifer James Price
Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga
George Atanasov
Jamella Lee
Carolyn Kain, J.D., Designee for HHS Secretary Dr. Kiame Mahaniah
Linda D. Sagor, M.D., M.P.H.

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Not Present

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, Vice-Chair

MINUTES

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chair Belsito provided opening remarks and introduced Secretary of Education Dr. Stephen Zrike. Chair Belsito provided an overview of the agenda.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Zrike provided opening comments and shared his experience in the early education field. Secretary Zrike expressed his excitement to join the Board in his new role.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Kershaw provided opening comments and welcomed Secretary Zrike to the Board. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update related to the Early Educator Loan Repayment Program and the Early Education Scholarship Program. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged the 21st Annual Autism Advocacy Day. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update related to the family child care incubator project. Commissioner Kershaw provided personnel updates. Commissioner Kershaw shared information related to the May Board meeting.

Statements from the Public

Chair Belsito acknowledged that public comments were received by email and distributed to the Board after the meeting.

Alicia Ginsburg, Berkshire Community College, provided public comment in support of the Career Pathways grant and shared how the grant supports educators at Berkshire Community College.

Tyeesha Keele-Kedroe also provided public comment in support of the Career Pathways grant and shared how the support provided by the grant has positively impacted her life personally and professionally.

Nacaira Tse Greenaway provided public comment on behalf of the Care That Works Coalition and in support of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care.

Routine Business:

- Approval of minutes from March 11, 2026 Meeting – VOTE
 - Approved with Secretary Zrike and Board Member Sagor abstaining

Items for Discussion and Action:

- Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care Overview & Recommendations for Next Steps

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Tyreese Nicolas-EEC Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement and Haji Shearer-EEC Associate Commissioner of Family & Community Supports to discuss FFN care. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided an overview of FFN care and shared her personal experience with FFN care. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the legislative requirement included in an outside section of the FY25 budget that required EEC to study the feasibility of a network for FFN care. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared the broad definition of FFN care and Informal Child Care (ICC). She discussed the benefits of each and clarified how they differ. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas explained how EEC defines and qualifies FFN care and explained the approval process. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas explained how ICC functions within the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) system. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas explained ICC CCFA daily reimbursement rates. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared ICC demographics and detailed CCFA funding for ICC. Associate Commissioner Shearer shared the considerations for building an FFN network. Associate Commissioner Shearer discussed the structures, sustainability, and legislative changes needed to build a strong FFN network. Associate Commissioner Shearer shared approaches to FFN care in other states. Associate Commissioner Shearer, Deputy Commissioner Nicolas, and Commissioner Kershaw discussed proposed next steps.

Board Members Sagor and Kain expressed support for expanding and strengthening FFN care. Board Members Price and Kain, Commissioner Kershaw, and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed EEC's regulatory and financial responsibilities for FFC care. Commissioner Kershaw and Board Members Kain and Price discussed the current CCFA rates for ICC. Board Members Lucas and Ruiz de Luzuriaga, Commissioner Kershaw, Deputy Commissioner Nicolas, and Associate Commissioner Shearer discussed ways to support the FFN network with available and existing resources.

- Standards for the Licensure of Residential Programs, Regulation Revisions

Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of efforts to revise EEC's Residential Program regulations. Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Joseph Rucker-EEC Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations, Tim Keane-EEC Director of Residential and Placement Services, Kelly Buckley-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor, Miguel Ortega-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor, and Susan Habchy-EEC Project Manager. Deputy Commissioner Rucker provided an overview of residential programs and the services provided to children, young adults, and families. Deputy Commissioner Rucker gave a brief history of the project to update and modernize regulations for residential programs and shared the primary goals of the revisions. Ms. Buckley discussed the key areas of reform and provided examples of each. Ms. Buckley shared goals for engagement with key partners and acknowledged the key partners. Mr. Keane provided an overview of public comments and shared specific examples of how the feedback was incorporated into the regulation revisions. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged the work undertaken to revise the regulations and shared next steps for implementation. Chair Belsito provided positive feedback on the revision process. Board Member Sagor provided feedback related to terminology updates. Board Member Kain acknowledged the effort required to revise the regulations and provided positive feedback. Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga and Director Keane discussed collaboration and engagement with residents and people with lived experiences.

- IT Modernization: Family Portal Update

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Tyreese Nicolas-EEC Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement, Elyse Tibbets-EEC Priority Access Manager, Krysten Berry-EEC Family Experience Product Owner, Jessi Murray-EEC Chief Product Officer, Amanda Sanchez-EOE Designer Researcher, and Ian Johnson-EOE Product Manager to discuss the IT modernization efforts and to provide an update related to the Family Portal. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas and Ms. Murray shared appreciation for the team and their work to modernize the CCFA IT systems. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided an update related to launching the new Family Portal. Ms. Berry shared the guiding principles for the modernization efforts. Ms. Tibbets explained the new digital portal and case management system, MyChildCareMA and how it will benefit families and program administrators. Ms. Berry shared the timeline to launch MyChildCareMA. Ms. Tibbets shared next steps for families. Ms. Tibbets and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the training and support plan for launching the family portal. Chair Belsito and Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga provided positive feedback.

Chair Belsito provided closing comments.

Meeting ended at 4:00PM