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| **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Thomas L. Weber, Commissioner** |

 **Board of Early Education and Care**

February 14, 2017

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**Department of Early Education and Care**

51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor

Boston, MA 02210

**MINUTES**

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

Nonie Lesaux, Ph.D., Chairperson

James Peyser, Secretary of Education

Patricia Mackin, designee of Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Health and Human Services

Mary Walachy, Vice Chairperson

Thomas L. Weber, Commissioner of the Department and Secretary to the Board

Sheila Balboni

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Katie Joyce

Alison Schonwald, M.D.

Joni Block

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.

J.D. Chesloff

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 p.m.

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chairperson Nonie Lesaux wished everyone a Happy Valentine’s Day and welcomed the Board’s newest member, Alison Schonwald, M.D. Chairperson Lesaux noted that there will be a change to the ordering of today’s Board Meeting agenda. The meeting will start with the Governor’s budget and the need to maintain a close eye on how it progresses, particularly with respect to workforce development and agency capacity. Next, the Board will spend time on revisions to the Quality Rating and Improvement System (“QRIS”) that are moving along within a good offline QRIS Ad Hoc Committee meeting. She advised paying attention to the Budget Presentation/QRIS Discussion with Information Technology (“IT”) in mind. QRIS is one of the first initiatives requiring significant IT infrastructure. She noted that she has had conversations with William Eddy, the President of the Massachusetts Association of Early Education and Care (“MADCA”), and will maintain communication with him as QRIS moves along. She explained that the Board Meeting will conclude with a discussion and vote on the 2016 Legislative Report.

**Comments from the Secretary:**

Secretary James Peyser stated that he would make his comments during the budget discussion.

**Comments from the Commissioner:**

Commissioner Thomas L. Weber welcomed Board Member Schonwald to the Board and expressed that she has already demonstrated her dedication to early education and care by volunteering to attend a child mental health meeting with him during an evening. He stated that he is looking forward to working with her in her new capacity.

**He updated the Board on the following:**

Licensing Education Analytic Database (“LEAD”):

Commissioner Weber informed the Board that the Department is in the process of preparing for phase two of the LEAD project. LEAD is the IT system replacing licensing manager as the primary system for building licensing practices, which fits into the Department’s new approach to licensing. Phase 2 of LEAD includes visit functionality, visit tools, and visit scheduling for licensors. Twenty-one licensors engaged in User Acceptance Testing (“UAT”), which was significant work. Commissioner Weber thanked field operations for their hard work, including the EEC staff who covered the workload of licensing staff involved in UAT. The LEAD project has been a model for collaboration between IT and Department staff.

The Office of the Child Advocate (“OCA”):

Commissioner Weber informed the Board that the Department is working with the OCA related to its report on residential schools licensed by EEC and approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“ESE”). It is estimated that the final report will be issued in March and the Department will share with a summary to the Board when it is released.

Caseload Projections:

Commissioner Weber informed the Board that the Department is taking another look at its caseload projections for FY17. The Department was projecting a $14M surplus, which does not take into account two areas of exposure: the Family Child Care (“FCC”) Collective Bargaining Negotiations that are in process; and repayment of the Department of Transitional Assistance (“DTA”) Parent Fees. The Department will review its numbers and provide an update to the Board’s Fiscal and Oversight Committee on February 28, 2017. The Department will suggest how to spend the projected surplus in the future, keeping in mind its existing exposures.

PEG Report:

The first year evaluation of PEG has been released. The report captures the workforce agenda that the Board and the Department have been building out.

Speaker Robert DeLeo’s Workforce Agenda:

Speaker Robert DeLeo’s initiative captures the workforce agenda that Department building on over last year and a half. Commissioner Weber expressed that he is excited about that opportunity, which could provide synergy for conversations that we are having today around QRIS revisions and what is necessary to take next steps and to operationalize updates to QRIS. Secretary Peyser shared feedback regarding the business taskforce convened by Speaker DeLeo and lead by Board Member J.D. Chesloff. The findings of the business group and the Board are consistent, focusing on workforce and quality. Secretary Peyser expressed his thanks to Board Member Chesloff and Board Member Mary Walachy for their leadership.

**Statements from the Public:**

**\****The Board of Early Education and Care makes up to 30 minutes available for persons in the audience to address the Board on specific agenda items. In order to hear as many speakers as possible, the Board limits individuals to three minutes, although written material of any length can be submitted to Chairperson Lesaux or Commissioner Weber.*

**Amy O’ Leary, Director of Early Education for All at Strategies for Children,** thanked Commissioner Weber and the Board for their leadership and focus on workforce and equality. She reported that $36 million is a great recommendation for a rate increase, and she is thrilled that Governor Baker included $7 million in his budget to support educators and moving the rate reserve line item within EEC. Ms. O’Leary stated that Strategies for Children will continue to advocate during House and Senate budget discussions to support the early education and care workforce. She reported that they were thrilled to see the evaluation of the first year of Preschool Expansion Grant (“PEG”) and agrees with Governor Baker’s assessment of the PEG program. She reported that in December there was a meeting that thirteen communities receiving PEG funding convened. One hundred people attended the meeting, including School Superintendents and Program Directors, and the energy in the room was palpable. The thirteen communities are the focus of advocacy, and the legislative session began with many bills filed. She looks forward to advocating for these pieces of legislation. She stated that there is a lot of fear of the unknown at this time, and she is hoping for the best while preparing for the worst.

**Routine Business**

* **Approval of Minutes from January 10, 2017 – Vote**

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the January 10, 2017 Board Meeting**. The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Committee Updates:**

Fiscal and Oversight Committee:

Board Member Chesloff became the Chair of the Fiscal and Oversight Committee in January 2017 after former Board Member Beth Childs left the Board. The Fiscal and Oversight Committee last met on January 23, 2017 with Board Member Joan Wasser-Gish, Secretary of Education Designee Ann Reale, and Commissioner Weber. The Fiscal and Oversight Committee discussed the caseload numbers. The Committee also received an update on the Child Care Financial Assistance (“CCFA”) System. The Committee discussed implementation of the FY17 rate reserve in January 2017, which is a retroactive rate increase for center-based programs and family child care systems. EEC staff is diligently working to reconcile union dues and repay DTA parent fees. The Committee also discussed the federal Race to the Top (RTT) Grant that ended in 2016 and is almost complete. EEC has committed all but $98k of the grant. The Committee reviewed the Child Care Development Fund (“CCDF”) licensing requirements. The presentation demonstrated that CCDF is a massive new undertaking. EEC has five (5) licensing exemptions that the Department did not previously monitor. Now, the Department must monitor license-exempt programs receiving CCDF funding. The Department now must also develop new health and safety requirements and trainings. Under CCDF, there are also reporting requirements to make licensing information publicly available. The recommended ratio of licensors to educators was one (1) licensor to every sixty (60) providers, and EEC’s ratios are not close to the recommended ratios. There is also a requirement to post full monitoring and inspection reports online, ensuring proper communication with the public. Finally, the Committee had a discussion with the Children’s Investment Fund (“CIF”). Currently, CIF is evaluating proposals for awards of funding for FY17. Board Member Chesloff reported that there are 395 new slots thanks to the work of the CIF.

* **Disclosures**

Board Member Eleanora Villegas-Reimers submitted a written disclosure that she is employed by Wheelock College, a recipient of EEC funding. Board Member Joni Block submitted a written disclosure that her position as the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (“CFCE”) Coordinator with Brockton Public Schools is funded by EEC. Board Member Sheila Balboni submitted disclosure that she is employed by Community Day Care d/b/a the Community Group, Inc., that receives EEC funding.

**New Business**

No new business was raised.

**Items for Discussion and Action**

1. FY18 House 1 Budget – Discussion

 *Relevant resources included in Board Materials*

* *FY18 House 1 Budget, PowerPoint Presentation dated February 14, 2017*

Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance William Concannon presented on behalf of the Department. Mr. Concannon explained that last month, Governor Baker released his budget recommendation and the Department did very well. The budget represents the importance of the Department’s work, and takes into account IT support as well as support for a rate increase. Mr. Concannon reported that the Executive Office of Education (“EOE”) received $96M, EEC received $552M, an increase of $4M over FY17 projected spending, which demonstrates the importance of the Department’s work. The budget includes money for the IT support needed to sustain maintenance for CCFA and LEAD. Board Member Block suggested that EEC emphasize the need for IT support to continue its workforce support. Mr. Concannon also reported that House 1 also offered language within its outside section to the budget amending the permissible uses of the EEC-managed Child Care Quality Fund, often referred to as the “License Plate Fund” to ensure flexibility with the funding.

Mr. Concannon stated the administration budget is extremely important. House 1 is slightly less from EEC’s projected spending for FY18, but there are some one-time costs included within the budget, such as the Department’s Quincy Regional Office move, to account for the higher level of funding.

Within the Caseload Accounts, Mr. Concannon explained that there is a renewed emphasis on increasing the contract utilization rate, which is slightly lower than we desire, but we expect it to improve this year. The Department does not want to project lower caseload numbers. The House 1 budget has an appropriation of $7M for a rate reserve within the Department’s budget, which move the rate reserve to the Department from the Executive Office of Administration and Finance (“ANF”).

Board Member Wasser Gish inquired about the implications of two line items. Within the quality line item, there is an important opportunity to increase agency capacity. How are we presently using this line item? Commissioner Weber responded that presently, the quality line item helps fund the Department’s field operations staff. There was a shift made in the Department’s FY17 budget to try and align quality dollars using for its federal match for the same line item. Staffing is one category within the line item, but it also encompasses the Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (“IPLE”) Grant, the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (“UPK”) Grant, and the Educator and Provider Support (“EPS”) Grants. This proposal would result in shifting approximately $1.4M within the quality line item to staffing, which is a shift away from other activities presently being funded through the grant. Among those subject to reduced funding is the IPLE grant, which the Department will phase out over a three year period. Approximately $3M will ultimately be phased out, leaving approximately $1.6M for other activities not being phased out.

Joan Wasser Gish’ second question relates to the rate reserve. She stated that a $7M rate reserve is a great start, but it is a step away from what was requested. What percentage of an increase would a $7M rate reserve provide? Mr. Concannon responded that using today’s numbers, $7M would result in a 2.1% rate increase.

Commissioner Weber noted that with respect to IT funding, the FY18 House 1 Budget accounts for operational funding for IT. The $1 million proposed is for ongoing activities and maintenance for the LEAD system. There is a separate IT process playing out somewhat in parallel, which is capital funding. The Department is working with EOE IT to identify priorities for additional funding. Commissioner Weber also stated that other areas where the Department is seeking capital funding is for background record checks and workforce supports, which are our chief priorities. He noted that workforce proposals are expansive, and there are a number of needs that will correlate with the Department’s workforce priorities. One is improving the Department’s Teacher Qualifications system to track workforce goals as well as upgrading the Department’s QRIS IT system and development of a learning management system. FY18 is the Department’s next available opportunity to seek out IT improvements. The Department is utilizing Mass IT’s statewide process for requesting capital bond funding for IT projects.

Board Member Wasser Gish stated that it seems that the Department’s priorities are tucked in different places. How do you think the Department will meet its substantial responsibilities under CCDF within this budget, and how close does it bring us to meeting these requirements? Commissioner Weber responded that it makes progress in all of the Department’s priority areas but it does not complete the priorities. During our budget presentation to the Board, the Department expressed that it would need 80 staff positions without additional IT enhancements. He stated that the Department has worked closely with the Board to develop its budget recommendation, and the House 1 budget recommendations brings the Department closer to compliance with CCDF.

1. MA Quality Rating and Improvement System Standards Revisions Update – Discussion

*Relevant resources included in Board Materials:*

* *MA Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Standards Revisions Update,* *PowerPoint Presentation dated February 14, 2017*

Deputy Commissioner for Program Administration Anita Moeller presented with Workforce Development Specialist Katie DeVita and Program Quality Specialist Amy Whitehead-Pleaux. Ms. Moeller explained that the purpose of the presentation is to inform the Board of how the Department sees the QRIS progressing, and to utilize this as an opportunity to obtain the Board’s feedback, and discuss how to engage stakeholders to ensure consistent messaging about QRIS and the workforce.

Ms. Moeller explained that a year ago, this Board concluded that the workforce would be a priority. The Department completed its QRIS Validation Study but it required further analysis. Two Board Committees were created to help move the move the QRIS Validation Study results forward, which around the time that Ms. Moeller came into her present role. The Board’s QRIS Ad Hoc Committee and the Department decided to evaluate national research, the Department’s licensing data, findings from the QRIS Validation Study, and how the Department is releasing its grants. There were many meetings with the field, who were inquiring about the Department’s direction for the early education and care workforce.

In August 2016, the Department laid out four key strategies. There was a desire to focus on the foundational needs of the workforce. There was also a need to ensure that there were competencies, but shifting the focus to foundational needs of the workforce. Coaching has become one of the mechanisms for supporting the workforce that the field is seeking.

Amy Whitehead-Pleaux explained that the QRIS survey was released shortly after the QRIS Validation Study. The QRIS survey was designed by Joanne Roberts and included 667 respondents, who were mostly early education and care program directors or family child care providers. Most of the respondents agreed either strongly or somewhat with the recommendations put forth by Joanne Roberts and her team. Some of the things discussed were around simplifying and streamlining system and reducing barriers. Some robust responses informed the Department that QRIS is on the right track if the Department would consider the field’s feedback. Some barriers were identified around the cost of professional development, curriculum, and access to staff within Program Quality Unit (“PQU”). In response to the survey question about programs’ greatest training needs, responses stated that training was most needed in the areas of classroom management, curriculum, social-emotional development, and language.

Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux explained that since the beginning of this month, the PQU has been working hard on QRIS revisions and developed guiding principles. The areas that the PQU is focusing on as QRIS revisions move forward, include ensuring balancing reciprocity, utilizing IT as an important component and involving programs in the QRIS process.

Board Member Mary Walachy stated that she is concerned about using the term “QRIS 2.0” noting the importance of being careful about our language and messaging moving forward. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that the Department is hoping to move forward consistently and in alignment with ESE.

Board Member Balboni inquired about the program types for each of the 667 respondents. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that she is not sure how many programs survey was sent to, but we know it is a fraction of the field across the mixed delivery system. Board Member Schonwald stated that the findings from QRIS Validation Study harkens back to the October findings that scores lowest about teacher messaging. It seems that all of the curriculum depends on teacher interactions. Ms. Moeller responded that she believes child-teacher interactions is core and something that must be addressed moving forward. Chairperson Leseaux agreed and stated that it cuts across all of these buckets and at its core are teacher relations and interactions.

Secretary Peyser stated with respect to the guiding principles slide, that principles are easier to articulate than apply. He inquired what principle the Department believes will be the biggest challenge in applying? With respect to the first one, balancing the field with the appropriate supports, he asked which work comes first. He asked if we start rolling out the QRIS IT infrastructure, then he inquired when the Department can move forward with issuing ratings. Acknowledging and even encouraging individualized or customized approaches by each provider but yet trying to fit within the context of a highly standardized system sounds great, but it is not clear how we can accomplish this work. He noted that in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (“MCAS”) domain, the terms “valid” and “reliable” have specific meanings. It is not clear whether these terms are supposed to mean the same thing. He inquired what reliability and validity standards are being used. Secretary Peyser stated that he does not know the practical implications of using those terms. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that the Department has been grappling with the principles of “valid” and “reliable” and will continue to analyze them moving forward. She explained that when the Department decides to implement the revised QRIS, then it must have the IT systems available to support it. She explained that the Department wants to make sure that it is appropriately designed. The Department is being thoughtful about what it built. With respect to the second part of Secretary Peyser’s question, Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux agreed that it is very tricky and the Department must consider where there is inter-relatable reliability, while allowing for upper tiers and more individuality. The Department is being more intentional about its QRIS requirements. Ms. Moeller noted that the PQU has begun a point system. In response to the Secretary’s third comment, Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux stated that the Department is looking for research to support the system with valid and reliable tools. Secretary Peyser noted that the hard part is knowing whether the tools when coming together make up a valid and reliable system.

Board Member Balboni noted the importance of ensuring that programs are involved and have the training to understand QRIS. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that the Department is at the beginning stages, but stated that the Department is trying to maintain some of current strengths in a simpler and easier to use system.

Board Member Block expressed appreciation for the streamlined nature of the QRIS revisions, which included instructional practice. She inquired how instructional practice differs from the second standard. She believes that instructional practices and classroom environment will inform the answers to those questions. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that right now, that is more the observed quality, bringing in the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (“CLASS”) and Environment Rating Scale (“ERS”) and utilizing the same tools throughout the entire system. The way that this is meant to be is to allow these areas to be its own standard and reduce the redundancies. Chairperson Lesaux noted that she could imagine down the line programs could be asking what the purchase is on standard 1 when you have standard 2 in play. What is that left over and what should we call it, noting that the ERS and CLASS will be key for helping decide.

Secretary Peyser suggested that shifting the labeling of standards and understanding what the standards mean could result in complexity. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that she agrees that it is difficult at this point to manage the complexity of QRIS without looking at the actual standards themselves. She stated that the big buckets that the Department is reviewing, include curriculum and assessment (ERS Component), healthy environment and safety (ERS Driven), and family engagement (ERS Component). The question to answer is what standards reflect best practices.

The PQU met with Dr. Joanne Roberts at the end of January, have a series of retreat days, meet at least weekly, and is starting to consider what the components of the QRIS will be evaluated. Next month, the PQU hopes to have a first draft to share with its thought partners, researchers, and other states. It is anticipated that the draft will be complete by March 10, 2017 for a check in meeting with the QRIS Ad Hoc QRIS Committee. The PQU wants to partner with other units within the Department to ensure an understanding of the QRIS revisions and implications. There will then be a final round of review and vetting with thought partners, and it is expected that the Department will have a final draft of the QRIS standards completed by the June 13, 2017 for a Board vote. The revisions require a lot of input broadly from the field and partners at EEC. The Department hopes that implementation will coincide with the release of the updated QRIS Program Manager application. The PQU is generating lists of questions for various groups, stakeholders, and teams, such as for the March 24, 2017 Advisory Council meeting.

Board Member Wasser Gish inquired, following Secretary Peyser’s comments, where the Board has an opportunity to grapple with some of these very difficult questions, which are important decision making points. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux responded that it is good to know what is most helpful for the Board. If helpful for you to see various drafts as they are created, then we are happy to share them with you.

Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux explained that she wanted to note the mid-March point, which is very ambitious. The QRIS Ad Hoc Committee can continue to meet after March, and during April through the first week of May so there is time to iterate the QRIS standards and continue to refine and revise them. Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux emphasized that programs should understand that programs will not be wiped to zero, and that QRIS level 3 providers will not be required to start over as an unrated or ungranted program moving forward.

Ms. Whitehead-Pleaux explained that QRIS will continue to evolve over time and the best messaging will include use of the word “periodically” to balance the openness to change. Board Member Balboni indicated that if flexibility is built into QRIS, then there is the ability to shift compliance, which may have unintended consequences. Ms. Moeller responded that the PQU is trying to build in flexibility to prevent the Department from being stuck with a draft.

Ms. Moeller discussed the importance of balancing the intersections between licensing and QRIS. She explained that at the bottom tier of the pyramid is the Potential Provider Meeting (“PPM”), orientation, and health and safety trainings. All of this work occurs currently without a licensing visit. After a provider becomes licensed, then there are ongoing health and safety trainings required to maintain an EEC license. Technical Assistance (“TA”) is available through EEC licensors and there is coaching available for the field through EPS grantees and other resources. The goal is to maintain, support, and develop, assistance for the workforce and you will hear about some initiatives from Ms. DeVita.

Board Member Block commented that if the Department is going to maintain a statewide EPS, then it is important to really look at statewide system/template to ensure that the general goals and objectives are consistent and that the resources have the same dosage and depth as QRIS. It is important to maintain the inclusion that is integrated across the state.

Board Member Chesloff inquired whether legislative authorization required to complete its workforce priorities. Commissioner Weber responded that there is no legislative authorization required, because EEC has a considerable set of statutes with enormous discretion and latitude. He does not believe we have encountered anything that has made us limited by our statute and states that the Department is in fine shape apart from the ever-present resource question. Ms. DeVita added that chapter 15D of the Massachusetts General Laws provides the Department with a lot to consider and legislative language supporting its workforce agenda.

Chairperson Lesaux stated that there are organizations that we should use to support QRIS. This is a tension because we want to keep our eye on a career path, but if we are looking at this area we must consider the cohesion of the organization, which must come within the workforce. Board Member Wasser Gish agreed adding that it is important to consider how we capitalize on the great work within all areas.

Ms. Moeller noted that there is a lot of work to release the grants. Next, the Department must determine the next steps for addressing its IT infrastructure needs. She expressed that the PQU is pushing hard, but there are other areas of the agency that have IT needs, which must be considered. Chairperson Leseaux thanked the presenters and explained that the QRIS revisions will be taken offline and will be brought back to the Board again in the spring of 2017.

1. 2016 Annual Report to the Massachusetts Legislature – Discussion and Vote

 *Relevant resources included in Board Materials:*

* *2016 Annual Report, PowerPoint Presentation dated February 14, 2017*

EEC’s Director of Communications and External Affairs Kathleen Hart presented the Department’s 2016 Annual Report to the Board. Commissioner Weber noted that Ms. Hart authored the 2016 Annual Report with contributions from staff members from the Department. Ms. Hart stated that Massachusetts Law requires the Department to submit an Annual Report to the Massachusetts Legislature regarding the Department’s programs and initiatives. The Annual Report also serves as a comprehensive summary of the Department’s activities for policymakers, stakeholders, and the public on behalf of educators, children, and families. Ms. Hart thanked the broad array of staff members across the Department who helped with the Annual Report.

Ms. Hart stated that the Department is required to report on its progress toward universal early education and care for preschool-aged children; estimates on preschool suspension and expulsions; child behavioral health needs; and workforce issues including professional development resources, data on certifications and professional qualifications registry, and scholarships.

Ms. Hart noted that the framework of the Annual Report is similar to last year, and the report covers the progress made by the Department in calendar year 2016. She stated that the structure of the Annual Report aligns with the four strategic directions of EEC: School Readiness and Family Support, High Quality Programs, Workforce Development, Leadership, Resources, and Accountability.

Ms. Hart stated that the Annual Report provides an overview of notable items in 2016. The Department focused on major federal initiatives including the reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant (“CCDBG”) and the completion of the first year of the Preschool Expansion Grant (“PEG”). The CCDBG reauthorization requires the Department to conduct annual monitoring visits of all licensed and license-exempt programs, post all licensing studies, reports, and investigation reports online, and conduct more comprehensive background record checks. Ms. Hart stated that the first cohort of PEG students graduate in Spring 2016, and evaluation results indicated that classrooms in all five communities provided high-quality learning environments.

Regarding School Readiness and Family Support, Ms. Hart stated that the Department funded an additional 1,768 vouchers for income eligible children and an additional 600 vouchers for children on DCF’s supportive child care waitlist. The Department funded 89 Coordinated Family and Community Engagement networks to provide informal early education opportunities and resources to parents and families. The Department funded six Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Networks to provide services to over 300 children at-risk of suspension or expulsion. The Department renewed EEC’s federal Head Start State Collaboration Office grant to partner with thirty Head Start agencies that support low-income children’s school readiness.

Regarding High Quality Programs, Ms. Hart stated that the Department transitioned to using the Licensing Education Analytic Database (“LEAD”) for investigation and licensing visit reports. The Department investigated allegations of non-compliance with regulations and pursuant to 51A Reports filed with the Department of Children and Families, and presented our work to the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association. The Department processed approximately 80,000 individual background record checks and conducted weekly cross-checks of the addresses of registered sex offenders. The Department awarded $3.6M in grants to six agencies for facilities development in program settings serving 500 children. The Department funded $6M in Universal Pre-K grants, totaling 165 programs, 505 classrooms, and 8,000 children.

Regarding Workforce Development, Ms. Hart stated that the Department processed 12,408 teacher qualifications applications, a 16% increase from 2015. The Department facilitated the approval of 743 educators for an Early Childhood Educator Scholarship, and supported a fourth year of the Post Master’s Certificate Program at UMass Boston, with nine students in the cohort scheduled to graduate in May 2017. The Department continued the Peer Assistance and Coaching project and offered the EarlyEdCon professional development conference for a second year in 2016. The Department, through the EPS networks, provided 28 professional development opportunities on the Early English Language Development standards and developed three modules on the standards that will be offered in 2017.

Regarding Leadership, Resources, and Accountability, Ms. Hart stated that the Department’s budget included $32M in a consolidated Quality Support account, $12.5M for a 3.6% rate increase for subsidized center-based child care providers, and a $200K investment for the second year of the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative. In addition, the Department fully transitioned to using the Child Care Financial Assistance (“CCFA”) system for managing $500M in child care subsidies and administering payments to subsidized child care programs.

Ms. Hart set forth the next steps for the 2016 Annual Report, which would be submitted to the legislature following a successful Board vote, and it will be posted online thereafter. Commissioner Weber thanked Ms. Hart for her work on the Annual Report, and noted that the activities described are merely highlights of all the work being performed by the Department. Commissioner Weber thanked the Department staff for the effort that made all of these accomplishments possible throughout the year.

Vice Chairperson Walachy congratulated Ms. Hart on the report and noted that the question should be if children are better off because of the work conducted by the Department. She stated that the Department may want to address this specific question in the Annual Report next year. Chairperson Lesaux stated that thinking through the organization of the Annual Report could address this question, and could call out the Department’s needs and unmet objectives.

Board Member Chesloff stated that there is likely a way to use the Annual Report as an advocacy tool. Board Member Villegas-Reimers stated that when she started on the Board, the Annual Report was over 100 pages. Since then, it was shortened and now includes and executive summary. Board Member Villegas-Reimers recommended that the Department include a letter of presentation where we translate the research and provide interpretative guidance. Ms. Hart responded that there are certain data points that the Department can pull out and include in the executive summary or the cover letter. Secretary Peyser added that as a counterpoint, he tends to dismiss reports that are more advocacy, and that it makes the case stronger when the report is as data driven and transparent as possible. Commissioner Weber stated that the Department has shifted the tone of the Annual Report away from promotional activity to laying out the facts.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED that the Board approves the 2016 Annual Legislative Report, as presented and included in the Board materials of February 14, 2017, and authorizes the Department to submit the Annual Legislative Report on its behalf.** The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

 Respectfully submitted,

 Thomas L. Weber

 Commissioner of the Department and

 Secretary to the Board