**Board of Early Education and Care Meeting**

June 9, 2015

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care**

51 Sleeper Street

Boston, MA 02210

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**MINUTES**

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

Jay Gonzalez, Chairperson

James Peyser, Secretary of Education

Robyn Kennedy, designee of Marylou Sudders, Secretary of EOHHS

Mary Walachy, Vice Chairperson

J.D. Chesloff

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.

Elizabeth Childs, M.D.

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.

Katie Joyce

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

**Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Absent:**

Joni Block

**The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.**

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair:**

Chairperson Jay Gonzalez welcomed attendees and announced that the EEC Board annual retreat will be in August 2015. He stated that he will leave the meeting for a phone call and Vice Chairperson Mary Walachy will conduct the meeting during his absence.

**Comments from the Secretary:**

Secretary Peyser did not have any comments for the Board.

**Comments from the Commissioner**:

Commissioner Tom Weber reported that EEC is the midst of a particularly busy time. He provided updates on the following activities:

**Earned Sick Time:** Commissioner Weber stated that the public endorsed earned sick time leave during the November 2014 election. Under the new law, EEC is the employer of Family Child Care (FCC) Providers who are reimbursed by the Commonwealth for providing subsidized child care. EEC will work with Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) and FCC Systems to ensure compliance with the law. Commissioner Weber stated that EEC intends to manage this initiative long-term by utilizing the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) System, but it will take time to integrate earned sick time into the system.

**FY2016 Budget:** EEC is finalizing its budget for FY2016, which is on today's agenda.

**Early Retirement Incentive Plan ("ERIP"):** As of today, twenty five qualified EEC staff plan to participate in ERIP, and two staff members are taking a retirement cash incentive offered to those who elect to retire and are at 80% payout. The deadline for applying for ERIP is June 12, 2015 and the final retiree numbers may change. Commissioner Weber reported that fourteen of the twenty seven staff proposed retirees are licensors. EEC is losing two of three staff in its Teacher Qualifications Unit and two of four staff in the Accounting Unit.

Chairperson Gonzalez inquired whether EEC is aware of its capacity to back fill positions vacated by retirees. He expressed concerns with reduced licensing staff when EEC licensors' caseloads are already far too high, and inquired whether the FY1206 budget will allow EEC to hire more staff. Commissioner Weber replied that EEC has not received its backfill allowance so he does not yet know how many positions he can fill. He continues to communicate with the Executive Office of Education, and is working to mitigate the loss of staff. He will update the Board after June 12, 2015, but will not know which positions EEC can fill until after the budget is finalized. Vice Chairperson Walachy asked whether EEC licensors participating in ERIP were concentrated in a particular region. Commissioner Weber replied that the Southeast, Cape & Islands Regional Office will be greatly impacted by ERIP.

**Recognition of EEC Staff:** Commissioner Weber recognized the retiring EEC staff for their years of service. Chairperson Gonzalez also thanked retiring staff for their service and offered his best wishes.

**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 Gonzalez or Commissioner Weber.*

**Stephanie Sanchez, Pre-Kindergarten Campaign Director, Stand for Children,** testified that children from low-income families who participate in high-quality Pre-Kindergarten are more likely to do well in school than those who do not attend Pre-Kindergarten.   **Senator Sal DiDomenico and Representative Alice Peisch filed** An Act Ensuring High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education, **modeling the bill after New Jersey’s successful Abbott Preschool Program**. Ms. Sanchez stated that the proposed legislation will improve performance by expanding access to high-quality Pre-Kindergarten programs for eligible children living in underperforming school districts. The proposed legislation entails a targeted, phased-in, and cost-effective approach that utilizes high-quality private, non-profit providers and the public school system. If the legislature fully funds the initiative, then 40,000 children would benefit each year.

**Chris Anderson, Anderson Roberts Research,** added that he collaborated with Stand for Children to complete a telephone survey targeting Massachusetts voters, polling their views on education. Mr. Anderson reported that polled voters responded that they would prioritize education over other expenditures with 67% approving the use of state funds to support pre-kindergarten and 61% agreeing that the state should spend $500 million annually on pre-kindergarten expenses. Half of the surveyed voters claimed they would be more likely to vote for someone who would raise taxes to pay for education.

Vice Chairperson Walachy asked if the poll defined quality during the phone survey. Mr. Anderson replied affirmatively.

**Mav Pardee, Program Manager, Children’s Investment Fund,** announced that the first closing for child care space purchased by the Beverly Children’s Learning Center, an Early Education and Out of School Time ("EEOST") Capital Fund recipient, occurred today. The EEOST Capital Fund has allowed the Beverly Children’s Learning Center to purchase and renovate new space for its program, which is expected to be completed by the end of the summer. The expansion will serve twenty-four additional children. Ms. Pardee noted that three additional EEOST Capital Fund grant recipients in Attleboro, Lawrence, and Lynn are also likely to close on spaces before the end of the summer. The launch of the EEOST Capital Fund Program has provided research groups the opportunity to measure and evaluate the impact of programs' physical space on program quality.

**Routine Business:**

**• Approval of May 12, 2015 Board Minutes - Vote**

**Amendment:** Board Member Joan Wasser Gish sought amendment to page four of the minutes removing the words, "within the next six months" from the statement, "the Department is working with Board Members to create a tiered rating system within the next six months."

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

**VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the May 12, 2015 Board Meeting as amended.** The motion passed unanimously.

* **Approval of FY16 Board Meeting Schedule – Vote**

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

**VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 15D, § 3(b), shall meet in accordance with the schedule set forth, and that all meetings will begin at 1:00 p.m. and will be held at the Department of Early Education and Care, which is located at 51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor, Boston, MA, unless otherwise announced and duly posted.** The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Committee and Advisory Reports**:

Oversight Committee:

Board Member Elizabeth Childs reported that the Oversight Committee met on June 1, 2015. The Committee discussed the FY2015 caseload review. With Income Eligible access closed (except for the waitlist remediation account), there is a projected surplus of $6.5 million, which is slightly more than last month’s estimate of $6.3 million. There is a $3.1 million surplus in the waitlist remediation account despite the closure of waitlist access but it is unclear why this occurred. Board Member Childs added that the DTA and Supportive accounts were adjusted to reflect $8 million transferred from the DTA account to the Supportive account in May.  The Supportive account's utilization rate is 118%. Currently, 56,480 children receive a subsidy, and the waitlist increased to 29,164 children. Board Member Childs reported that there will only be a 0.62% reversion this year, which is approximately $334,000, because Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance Bill Concannon and his team had strong caseload projections.

Chairperson Gonzalez inquired whether the $6.5 million was the total surplus. Board Member Childs confirmed and added that the Income Eligible account reflects the majority of the surplus. Deputy Commissioner Concannon and Board Member Childs explained the basis for the surplus. Commissioner Weber added that the agency must have another conversation regarding what is causing the shift in numbers. Vice Chairperson Walachy asked if there is sliding scale for contract slots, as affordability could be a factor. Commissioner Weber replied that affordability is always a possibility.

Vice Chairperson Walachy conducted the meeting during the short absence of Chairperson Gonzalez.

Policy, Research and Communications Committee:

Board Member Wasser Gish reported that the Policy, Research and Communications Committee met jointly with the Strategic Initiatives Committee on June 1, 2015. Committee members discussed the Preschool Expansion Grant ("PEG") which is on today’s agenda. Board Member Wasser Gish suggested that the PEG should be an agenda topic for a joint EEC- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Board Meeting. Committee members also discussed the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant ("CCDBG") reauthorization and its major requirements. States must implement more extensive background record checks, annual inspections of licensed and license-exempt providers, and offer parents a choice between a voucher and a contract. Board Member Wasser Gish emphasized that CCDBG reauthorization should be a priority topic for the Strategic Initiatives Committee and for the Board Retreat, and the requirements will be shared with the Advisory Council. She also reported that the Committee discussed the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant sustainability planning.

Strategic Initiatives Committee:

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers reported that the Strategic Initiatives Committee discussed one additional topic after the joint meeting, a proposal to create one overall license for early education providers working with children from birth to eight years old. Currently, EEC grants credentials to its educators while ESE grants licenses to teachers. The Committee will present this topic in the future so Board Members can consider whether this topic should be a strategic initiative.

Vice Chairperson Walachy inquired when the joint EEC-ESE Committee will be formalized. Commissioner Weber replied that this is a work in progress due to administration changes across both agencies.

Advisory Council:

Commissioner Weber reported that there was no meeting in May and the next meeting would occur on Friday, June 19, 2015.

**New Business**

No new business was raised.

• **Disclosures**

Board Member Scott-Chandler submitted a written disclosure that she is employed by Action for Boston Community Development, a recipient of EEC funding and ABCD has or may have a financial interest in the Preschool Expansion Grant and FY 2016 Budget. Board Member Villegas-Reimers submitted a written disclosure that she works for Wheelock College, a recipient of EEC funding.

**Items for Discussion and Action**

**I. Child Care Financial Assistance System (CCFA) Update -- Discussion**

*Relevant resources included in Board Materials*:

• *Child Care Financial Assistance System (CCFA) Update, PowerPoint Presentation dated June 9, 2015*

EEC Chief Information Officer Tanuja Gopal, in conjunction with Head Architect Brian Czajak, presented an update on CCFA. Ms. Gopal explained that CCFA will make marked improvements to EEC’s subsidy system and thanked providers and CCR&Rs for their help and contributions to the project. CCFA is a web-based system that will uniformly apply child care financial assistance policies and requirements. It is module-based, with each module dedicated to a specific part of the business process. Ms. Gopal described the improvements, including a single application and database, flexible usability, maintainability, and enhanced performance. Ms. Gopal reported that classroom training and on-line webinars have been utilized as part of EEC's CCFA End User Engagement Plan. She added that as part of the CCFA launch and post-launch supports, EEC has scheduled additional in-person and virtual trainings from June to September 2015.

Board Member Katie Joyce asked about the universe that requires training. Ms. Gopal responded that EEC works with over 180 contracted providers and seven CCR&Rs, with several people employed at each of these organizations requiring training. Commissioner Weber added that the regional trainings have been conducted to ensure that as many people as possible have been trained on CCFA.

**II. Preschool Expansion Grant Update--Discussion**

*Relevant resources included in Board Materials*:

• *Massachusetts Preschool Expansion Grant, Power Point Presentation, dated June 9, 2015*

*• Lowell Collaborative Flyer, Word Document*

*• Lawrence Enrollment Page, Word Document*

*• Lawrence Website, Word Document*

Anita Moeller, EEC PEG Director, Jocelyn Bowne, EEC Senior Research Specialist, and Donna Traynham, ESE Early Learning Team Leader, provided an update on PEG. Massachusetts is one of eighteen states to receive the grant and is eligible to receive $15 million each year over the course of the next four years, but renewal is not automatic. Ms. Moeller explained that the purpose of the grant is to provide high-quality early education to low-income children.

Ms. Traynham described the grant requirements, which include evidence-based elements of high-quality programs and a BA-degreed teacher in every classroom. She described the implementation policy design, the variety of models already in place, and how they pertain to the Preschool Expansion Partnership Model. PEG communities will feature partnerships between local school districts, Head Start programs, and either one or two EEC-licensed early learning providers. The five PEG communities are Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield.

Board Member Robyn Kennedy asked whether the individual program or the PEG community is responsible for meeting the holistic needs children. Ms. Moeller responded that both local and statewide partners would meet these needs, as part of the birth to third grade alignment continuum. Secretary Peyser asked about the funding beyond the grant’s end. Ms. Moeller replied that EEC is looking at how to leverage existing resources. Secretary Peyser then asked if there were any preliminary results for other funding sources and if it will be replicated and/or sustained in other communities. Ms. Moeller replied that the communities have discussed uncapping Chapter 70 funding. Secretary Peyser expressed that EEC needs to think about how the grant impacts resource allocation for birth through third grade programs. Commissioner Weber acknowledged Secretary Peyser's concern and added that EEC will consider if additional federal dollars add flexibility so that state funding can be redeployed to serve Infants and Toddlers.

Ms. Moeller described the components of support and monitoring, the common design elements, and the local partners' variations in their preliminary plans. Ms. Moeller also set forth the preliminary challenges and applauded the work performed by the PEG grantees to move this initiative forward.

Board Member Joyce asked whether these PEG communities are also providing Universal Pre-Kindergarten and inquired about Holyoke, specifically. Ms. Traynham responded that 30% of children in Holyoke enter kindergarten without having attended pre-kindergarten. Board Member Joyce then asked about the inclusion of children with disability within grant-recipient communities. Ms. Moeller responded that the federal requirement is 6.9% of the children have to have a documented disability. Ms. Traynham added that PEG allows EEC to think of a more diverse model of providing services to children with disabilities and that it may be a challenge to provide a longer day, full-year program when these children transition to public school kindergarten.

Board Member Villegas-Reimers stated that she was a member of Boston's Pre-Kindergarten Task Force, and that the Task Force struggled with the issue of special needs students, English Language Learners, and teacher compensation. Board Member Scott-Chandler observed that programs that enroll children with special needs assist families to get an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for their child, and that PEG programs may see an increase in the number of students with IEPs.

Ms. Bowne stated that over $3 million is available over the grant's lifetime for research and evaluation and described the components of the evaluation. She noted that EEC intends to hire an external firm to conduct the research. Secretary Peyser asked if there would be a control group outside of the PEG children. Ms. Bowne replied that this is currently being planned. Chairperson Gonzalez added that this is important so that the agency can demonstrate that high-quality programs yield better child outcomes. Board Member Wasser Gish noted that the QRIS validation study could provide a baseline for evaluation.

Secretary Peyser asked about the quantitative outcomes that one should expect to see and if EEC had a definition of success in terms of the grant-funded classrooms. He also suggested that the evaluation group should look at third grade reading proficiency as a benchmark. Chairperson Gonzalez and Board Member Scott-Chandler commented that this should be a topic at the August retreat. Board Member Childs added that the evaluation group should focus on things that EEC can actually control, and should include parents and families on the evaluation advisory group.

**III. FY16 Budget Update -- Discussion**

*Relevant resources included in Board Materials*:

• *FY16 Budget Update, PowerPoint Presentation dated June 9, 2015*

Deputy Commissioner Concannon presented the FY2016 Budget Update to the Board. He stated that the Senate recommended a budget of $552.2 million for EEC, which is $7.8 million more than the House’s recommendation. Both the House and Senate budgets offer maintenance or level funding for most accounts. However, the Senate budget adds several targeted investments in direct care and quality improvements, and recommends a significant structural change in the caseload accounts. The House budget also offers investments in direct service, a rate increase, and sets aside $4 million in the Family and Infant item for quality. Deputy Commissioner Concannon provided an overview of each line item, noting the difference in the House and Senate proposed appropriations for each.

Chairperson Gonzalez asked if the proposed budget includes the potential impact of the earned sick leave law. Deputy Commissioner Concannon responded that without supplemental funding, the costs of earned sick time will result in fewer children served. Commissioner Weber added that the proposed earned sick time regulations have been available for only four to five weeks, and the ability to project costs did not happen until then. Board Member Wasser Gish asked if earned sick time would also be allocated for substitute care, to which Deputy Commissioner Concannon replied yes.

Chairperson Gonzalez stated that EEC should be pleased with the proposed budget, compared to the budgets that other state agencies may be confronted with but cautioned that EEC will need to look for ways to move the needle with respect to reforms and other projects. Board Member Childs added that the agency is very appreciative of where it stands with respect to the budget. She also provided detail regarding the proposed transferability between caseload accounts.

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

**VOTED that the meeting adjourn at 4:01 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairperson.** The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas L. Weber

Commissioner of the Department and

Secretary to the Board