Department of Early Education and Care

DATA ADVISORY COMMISSION ON EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

Tuesday, July 23, 2025
1:00PM to 2:30PM
Virtual Meeting: Zoom Webinar
https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass

Commission Member Attendees:

- Amy Checkoway, Deputy Commissioner for Policy, Strategy and Research, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) *(filling in for Amy Kershaw, Commissioner, EEC)*
- Mark Reilly, Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer, Executive Office of Education
- Victoria Bergeron - Policy Researcher, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
- Patrick Stanton - Executive Director, Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
- Marisa Fear - Director of Policy, Strategies for Children (*attending for Titus DosRemedios, Strategies for Children)*
- Laura Perille – President and CEO, Nurtury Early Education
- Kate Barrand – President and CEO, Horizons for Homeless Children
- Kate Warren Barnes – Head of Massachusetts Strategy and Impact, Jumpstart for Young Children
- Kate-Marie Roycroft – CEO of Alliance of MA YMCAs
- Jen Aldworth – Executive Director, Massachusetts Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs
- JD Chesloff – President and CEO, Massachusetts Business Roundtable
- Harold Blanco – Co-owner, Paula's Barn Child Care
- Emmalie Dropkin – Director of Data Planning and Evaluation for Head Start and Early Learning Programs, Community Action Pioneer Valley
- Amaris Kinne – Director of Research, Neighborhood Villages
- Adam Jones – Budget Analyst, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, and Representative from Common Start Coalition
- Andrea Howard – CEO, West End House Boys & Girls Club
- Tom Weber - Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood
- Brian Gold – Executive Director, Massachusetts Early Childhood Funder Collaborative *(filling in for Ellen Dickenson - Research Analytics and Planning, United Way of Massachusetts Bay)*

EEC Staff Attendees:

- Ashley White – Director of Research, EEC
- Michelle Saulnier – Data Analyst, EEC
- Chris Power – Chief of Staff, EEC
- Eugenia Soiles – Director of External Engagement, EEC

- Addison Koelle – Legislative Director, EEC
- Kristyn Berry - Product Owner, EEC
- Jessi Murray – Chief Product Officer, EEC

Minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions

Amy Checkoway, EEC Deputy Commissioner of Policy, Strategy, and Research, provided opening remarks and welcomed the members of the Data Advisory Commission to their second meeting of 2025. Deputy Commissioner Checkoway shared an overview of the agenda and discussed strategy for future meetings. Deputy Commissioner Checkoway turned to Mark Reilly, Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer, Executive Office of Education, for additional remarks. Undersecretary Reilly drew Commission members' attention to the work of the Education-to-Career (E2C) Research and Data Hub, given the interrelated goals of the Hub and the Commission.

2. Reminder of Commission Charge and Focus

Deputy Commissioner Checkoway reminded the Commission of some of EEC's priority research and data areas, which include identifying key data and analyses needed to understand the landscape and inform policy decisions; expanding public access to EEC data and analyses; improving data quality; and streamlining data collection. The Commission also reviewed their formal charge which includes playing a consultation role on data metrics and annual data reporting. Deputy Commissioner Checkoway also referenced the plan to generate recommendations from the Commission in the annual report due to the Legislature. Deputy Commissioner Checkoway reviewed some of the data that EEC is expected to collect and previewed the family-focused EEC data sources and data systems related to this meeting's agenda.

3. EEC Research Agenda: Family Access Research Questions

Ashley White, EEC Director of Research, provided an overview of EEC's research agenda and discussed the ongoing development of a standardized process for regularly updating the agenda. Director White provided examples of current family access-focused research questions and asked for family access-related feedback on areas of focus that should be prioritized for future research, how best to engage external stakeholders in updates to the EEC research agenda, and how to make the agenda more accessible to researchers and other stakeholders.

Laura Perille, CEO of Nurtury Early Education, requested further focusing on assessing the impact of policy changes related to CCFA access and eligibility. Emmalie Dropkin, Director of Data Planning and Evaluation for Head Start and Early Learning Programs, Community Action Pioneer Valley, also commented on the value of additional analyses related to the impact of EEC CCFA policy changes. She also discussed concerns regarding data collection, especially from immigrant and refugee communities, and the potential impact of data collection on program participation for these populations.

Brian Gold, Executive Director of the MA Early Childhood Funder Collaborative, suggested prioritizing research and data analyses that have the greatest impact on families experiencing hardship now, which could potentially involve public-private partnerships that have the capacity for more rapid turnaround. Mr. Gold also provided further feedback on possible analyses related to access in CPPI communities. Kate Warren Barnes, Head of Massachusetts Strategy and Impact, Jumpstart for Young Children, and Director White discussed potential data collection and research related to families accessing Child Care Financial

Assistance (CCFA) through Department of Children & Families (DCF) vouchers to inform opportunities for upstream interventions.

4. Leveraging Data to Better Understand Access to Care

Deputy Commissioner Checkoway introduced Michelle Saulnier, EEC Data Analyst, to share some data related to system capacity and supply and demand. Ms. Saulnier reviewed capacity data and noted that the information is contained in EEC's publicly available KPI dashboards on EEC's website. Ms. Saulnier next described EEC's utilization of the Child Universal Success Platform (CUSP), an integrated data platform that uses administrative data from EEC, along with other data sources, including Census data, to feed a model that allows for insight into the supply and demand for early education and care in Massachusetts. Ms. Saulnier also shared ways that the agency has used the CUSP model recently, including the ways in which the model can help provide a high-level overview of potential formal child care access deserts by age group and region.

Director White discussed recent research findings related to family preferences for early education and care, and Deputy Commissioner Checkoway discussed some of EEC's current levers to help expand system capacity and accessibility.

Commission members were asked for feedback about additional analyses of data that should be considered, additional data needed, metrics or data points that would be helpful to share publicly, and how else EEC can use supply and demand data to inform policy and program decisions.

Jen Aldworth, Executive Director, Massachusetts Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs, and Deputy Commissioner Checkoway discussed extending the age 0-5 analyses shared to after school and out of school time care. Tom Weber, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood, reflected on how the data, especially regarding understanding child and family needs, can influence and impact decision-making. Kate-Marie Roycroft agreed. Harold Blanco, Co-Owner of Paula's Barn, Inc. Family Child Care, commented on the need for additional data related to capacity and enrollment to help determine why programs are sometimes unable to fill their license capacity if families are looking for care.

5. Publicly Available EEC Family Access Data

Deputy Commissioner Checkoway noted that due to time limitations, this agenda item will instead be addressed at an upcoming meeting.

6. Family-Focused Data Collection & Reporting: Opportunities for Improving Data Quality and Streamlining

Director White next described current and future opportunities for improving family-focused data quality and streamlining data collection. Kristyn Berry, EEC Educator Experience Product Owner, provided an overview of the development of the new Family Portal and next steps. Ms. Berry explained some of the anticipated benefits of the family portal for families, family access administrators (FAA), and EEC. Ms. Berry confirmed that the new family portal will collect the primary language spoken in households. Ms. Berry and Jessi Murray, EEC Chief Product Officer, then explained the process by which family eligibility can be updated for families on the waitlist, as family circumstances change. Director White also clarified about the data that will be collected from the family portal. Undersecretary Reilly and Deputy Commissioner Checkoway acknowledged the importance of protecting sensitive information collected from

families.

Commission members were asked to provide input on what data elements they think are most interesting, elements that EEC should try to prioritize collecting as part of the new family portal, other issues that EEC should be attentive to as the portal is developed, and generally what data elements EEC should prioritize in terms of improving data quality and comprehensiveness in the future.

Harold Blanco and Deputy Commissioner Checkoway briefly discussed data to better understand effects of recent federal policies on staffing and the workforce pipeline. Emmalie Dropkin suggested that it would also be helpful to better understand effects generally on staffing due to Paid Family Medical Leave. Laura Perille and Deputy Commissioner Checkoway discussed opportunities for better clarity and alignment across EEC's current KPI Dashboards and licensing terminology. Tom Weber commented on the need to filter priorities and prioritize those that most closely align with current and future data system capabilities.

7. Approval of April Minutes – VOTE - and Next Steps

Kate-Marie Roycroft moved approval of the Commission meeting minutes from April 3, 2025, and Harold Blanco seconded the motion. The Commission members present voted unanimously to approve the minutes with a few non-substantive edits, with Tom Weber and Brian Gold abstaining.

Deputy Commissioner Checkoway provided brief closing remarks, including a reminder of the Commission's meeting schedule for the remainder of calendar year 2025. The final meeting of the year will take place on October 21, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM.