Name/Organization	Topic/Comments
Jeanne Deyo	**Food program:** Please make it so we all belong in the same tier. It's not fair that we get a smaller amount when the price of food is so expensive. Would really appreciate it if you could help us with this issue. Thank you 🙏
Mary Pat Messmer, Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce	**Reimbursement Rates:** The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce has established an Early Education and Care Task Force to address the access and affordability crisis in our communities of Cape Cod. Our membership includes members of the provider community as well as business leaders. Over this past year we have engaged in advocacy and community education, data collection and outreach. We were most pleased to welcome Commissioner Kershaw in June to engage in a round table conversation about the unique challenges faced by families and providers on the Cape. We are writing to you today in anticipation of the Board meeting. We have been encouraged, as we listened to past meetings, that the team at EEC recognizes the rate disparities that exist and hope the new rate plan will reflect the need for significant increases are needed to sustain the Early Education industry on Cape Cod. We have much work to do to solve the myriad of challenges faced by our families and providers. A rate restructure will be a major step in the right direction. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and will look forward to your discussion on rates.
Lindsay Mangold, Children's Literacy Initiative	**Early Childhood Support Organization Initiative:** I appreciate the opportunity to share with you today some highlights from the MA ECSO (Early Childhood Support Organization) Initiative. The MA ESCO Initiative includes a collaborative partnership between CLI (Children's Literacy Initiative), UMB Strong Start, and University of Florida's Lastinger Center's Flamingo Early Learning. I would like to share a highlight on behalf of CLI about the work happening with Leaders and Educators in our 34 programs across the commonwealth. CLI offers support to programs in three main ways. We provide all classrooms the materials necessary for success – we provide our curriculum, Blueprint for Early Learning, to all preschool/PreK classrooms and a coordinating book set to all Infant/Toddler classrooms. This is a total of about 70 books per classroom that are identity affirming, content connected, and rich with literary access points. We also offer a partnership with High Scope's COR Advantage assessment system along

	with these print materials. The core of our support is 40+ hours of leader coaching and 20+ hours of direct educator coaching with our team and over 10 hours of trainings for leaders and 8 hours of trainings for educators. We believe that with this combination – materials and support – it can lead to lasting impact for the children of our programs. A success I would like to share comes out of a small group meeting at one of our programs this week. This program has been deeply thinking about the demand on educators when we ask to plan, prep, and implement a fully thoughtful and intentional day for children. They know this is no small task, and they have worked to make their leadership systems respond in support. One support strategy they implemented was leader-facilitated small group meetings for educators teaching similar ages. In the meeting I joined this week, leaders were facilitating opportunities to link activities to outcomes for children. There were recommendations for gathering time modifications, a science activity, and a data reflection component for what outcomes teachers have been tagging most. The victory of this meeting was in the way the leader showed their learning about Adult Learning Theory. In the meeting, we sang the song teachers could bring to Gathering Time, we used the pipettes ourselves to investigate droplets in water and in cooking oil, then we told real stories of our classrooms as we tried to process the data. The time was protected, hands on, and teachers left with an abundance of ideas to try. We are excited to see this leadership team use what they are learning about showing up as a coach and taking that into the protected team time they've developed. The proof is in the classrooms – the new song can be heard in the hallways, the pipettes and ice cube trays are poised at the sinks, and teachers are buzzing about new ideas.
Dawn Forbes DiStefano, Square One	**Reimbursement Rates:** To the Massachusetts Board of Early Education and Care, Commissioner Kershaw and EEC Staff, Thank you for the opportunity to share written testimony regarding the FY24 Child Care Financial Assistance agenda item. My initial reaction to reviewing the board meeting packet is a deep sense of gratitude for the hope and optimism your work provides to a field of extremely dedicated and exhausted professionals. After decades of applying a rate reimbursement reflective of a flawed market rate survey combined with flat rate percentage increases across all regions – it's outstanding to view and experience how far we have come. Thank you. I have developed an understanding of the patience required to change such a system – especially one addressing a historically underfunded field of practice. In light of the three (3) options offered in the board meeting material, I have to voice my support for the three (3) regional approach. It appears to close the gap between regions in the most expeditious way and

	moves our Commonwealth forward to a more equitable reimbursement system. My secondary reaction is to maintain attention to the critical nature of continuing to have C3 funding available. The increased rate is moving closer to the cost of actual care – but without C3 – my business would be right back in fear of closing. I feel it's my responsibility to ensure you all understand this delicate balance. I also feel compelled to share the importance of C3 Social Vulnerability Index add-on funding. Moving forward, I would suggest we contemplate developing a chart that is similar to the ones offered in the presentation – but adding a column for SVI. In this way, rate reimbursement would offer baseline rate, quality add-on in addition to a third column for SVI. I believe this mechanism is a key variable reflecting the sub-regional variations in vulnerable community need. Thank you for investing so much time, effort and capital in providing proposals that make my team and myself feel heard and valued. We know that we won't be able to fix a system that was broken over many years – in a few funding cycles. But we can remain committed to each other in providing transparency and commitment to equity. Ultimately, we know that if we build a system for the most vulnerable – in the end every child and family will obtain what they need to thrive. If we leave our most vulnerable out of the equation – we risk losing everyone.
Amy Hall, Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc.	**Reimbursement Rates:** As the President and CEO of Child Care of the Berkshires, a non-profit agency dedicated to educating young children and supporting families in Berkshire County Massachusetts, I am compelled to comment on the critical issue of regional inequities in child care rates across our state. I am happy to hear that the Commissioner truly understands the impact of the regional inequity and I commend the EEC team for taking steps to rectify this. I am writing to ask you, the Board of the MA Department of Early Education and Care, for the rectification of the substantial regional disparities in child care funding. In order to show the impact of these inequities, we compared what our Early Childhood Center receives in reimbursement in one year vs. an equivalent center in Boston. The difference is $485,000 per year, 44% less. This discrepancy is fundamentally unjust and puts an added strain on the budgets of Western MA programs who are committed to high quality services for low income families. In Western MA, child care centers operate under comparable expenses to those in other regions. We bear identical responsibilities in compensating our dedicated staff, securing space, and covering essential utilities like electricity, heating, and

	snow removal. Yes, there is a slight difference in rent and other costs, however, the difference in costs is substantially smaller than the difference in rates. Statewide, child care centers grapple with the ongoing challenge of recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators, primarily due to insufficient wages for this rewarding but also challenging work. Yet, the pronounced regional inequity exacerbates our struggle and undermines the very essence of providing quality care and education to children in Berkshire County. I am heartened to hear that you will be considering rectifying the region rate inequities. I appreciate the work you are doing and the changes you are making. These changes will have a positive impact on the children, the families, the early education workforce throughout the State of MA. Thank you.