

**Board of Early Education and Care
December 18, 2024
1:00 PM – 4:00PM**

**Community Teamwork, Inc.
126 Phoenix Ave
Lowell MA, 01852**

<https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass>

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Commissioner

Paul Belsito, Chair

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, Vice-Chair

Jamella Lee, via phone

George Atanasov

Dr. Kimberly D. Lucas, via phone

Cheryl Travers

Linda D. Sagor, M.D., M.P.H.

Carolyn Kain, J.D., Designee for HHS Secretary Kate Walsh

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Not Present

Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga

Jennifer James Price

MINUTES:

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chair Belsito provided welcoming remarks. He thanked Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI) for hosting the meeting and welcomed incoming CTI Chief Program Officer, Kayombo Kamawu. Mr. Kamawu shared information about the services CTI provides to children and families. Chair Belsito provided an overview of the agenda.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Tutwiler thanked CTI for hosting the Board meeting.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Kershaw provided welcoming remarks. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding recently awarded large capital grants and the Family Child Care capital grant application process. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the Early Education Scholarship Program administered with the Department of Higher Education and the Career Pathways program. Commissioner Kershaw discussed Apprenticeship Week and efforts to support apprenticeship programs, including recently announced scholarships, funding, and after-

school apprenticeship programs. Commissioner Kershaw reflected on EEC efforts to support early education and care in 2024 and expressed gratitude to the Secretary and Board Members. Commissioner Kershaw provided information regarding the January 2025 Board meeting.

Statements from the Public

Chair Belsito acknowledged that public comment was received by email and was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting.

Gillian Budine from Community Network for Children discussed the background of her program and the communities they serve. She provided comment in support of the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant and increasing access to early childhood education resources through enrichment and socialization opportunities. Ms. Budine advocated for increased funding for CFCE and shared feedback from other CFCE coordinators about how additional funds could be utilized.

Routine Business:

- Approval of Minutes from November 13, 2024 Meeting – VOTE
 - Approved unanimously

Items for Discussion and Action:

- Inter-agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force Update

Chair Belsito welcomed Secretary Tutwiler, Lauren Jones-Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development Secretary, and Sarah Stanton-Executive Office of Economic Development Undersecretary of Economic Strategies to provide an update regarding the Inter-agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force. Secretary Tutwiler provided background information regarding the Task Force. Secretary Tutwiler outlined the guiding values of the Task Force and the Task Force priorities. Secretary Tutwiler highlighted milestones and deliverables executed by the Task Force in its first year. Secretary Tutwiler discussed the engagement sessions and shared feedback received from the communities at the engagement sessions. Secretary Tutwiler shared key learnings from surveying other states and countries. Secretary Jones shared her experience on the Task Force and detailed the whole government approach utilized by the Task Force. Undersecretary Stanton shared her experience participating in the engagement sessions. Secretary Tutwiler detailed next steps for the Task Force. Commissioner Kershaw expressed her gratitude to Secretary Tutwiler, Secretary Jones, and Undersecretary Stanton, and for the work accomplished by the Task Force and other state government partners to date. Chair Belsito expressed thanks to Secretary Tutwiler, Secretary Jones, and Undersecretary Stanton, and commented on the Task Force's efforts to support a broader early educator workforce with a whole government approach. Chair Belsito and Secretary Tutwiler discussed the anticipated release of the Task Force's Year 1 report.

Co-Chair Moeller and Secretary Jones discussed opportunities for community involvement on a local level. Board Member Lucas discussed the broad implications of early child care policies and shared their experience participating in the engagement sessions. Board Member Lucas shared that they are looking forward to the release of the Task Force's Year 1 Report. Chair Belsito commented on the high level of engagement with the business and philanthropy

communities and anticipated how their contributions will be included in the Year 1 Report. Chair Belsito thanked Secretary Tutwiler, Secretary Jones, and Undersecretary Stanton for their participation in the Task Force and the Board meeting. Secretary Tutwiler thanked his Task Force co-chairs for their engagement and support in the Task Force. Chair Belsito thanked all the participants of the listening sessions.

- Care Financial Assistance FY25 Reimbursement Rate Increase – Overview & Options for Consideration

Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the FY25 budget allocations for Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) reimbursements and highlighted the outcomes from rate increases implemented in FY24.

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Amy Checkoway-EEC Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, & Data, Ashley White-EEC Director of Research, and Paul Ward-EEC Senior Budget Analyst, to review the updated cost study and discuss FY25 reimbursement rate increase options for the Board to consider. Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway acknowledged the EEC staff who participated in the work being discussed. Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway provided background information regarding CCFA and shared changes and increases to the FY24 CCFA rates. She discussed feedback received from providers regarding the rate increases. Senior Associate Checkoway shared an update regarding the use of the federally approved cost-informed methodology for FY25. Senior Associate Checkoway provided a recap of the presentation by American Institutes for Research (AIR) at the November Board meeting. Senior Associate Checkoway shared data about the current daily CCFA rates for center-based and family child care by region and age group. Chair Belsito and Board Member Kain acknowledged the work required to transition from market study to cost-based methodology. Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the rate increase/reserve language included in the FY25 budget and the FY24 supplemental budget. Board Member Lucas, Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the updated cost model for family child care wage assumptions. Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway outlined the guiding principles for the FY25 rate proposal. Director White discussed the two options for allocation of the FY25 rate reserve and highlighted the differences between the two options. Commissioner Kershaw clarified that the two options presented to the Board are targeted to adjust rates that are historically low and stated that additional options that were researched but are not being presented are included in the appendix for reference. Director White detailed Options 1 and 2 for center-based and family child care rates by percent of cost of care and explained the impacts of each. Director White compared the options with the FY24 rates across regions. Director White summarized the options. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the agency's preference but emphasized that input and further discussion from the Board was welcome. Board Member Kain thanked Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway, Director White, Senior Budget Analyst Ward, and their teams for their work and easy to understand presentation. Co-Chair Moeller shared her preference and provided feedback on both options. Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway shared next steps for the rate increase proposals for FY25, FY26, FY27, and beyond. Commissioner Kershaw stated that feedback will be considered prior to the Board taking any action on the proposals.

Chair Belsito provided closing comments.

Meeting Adjourned 3:15PM