

**Board of Early Education and Care**

**February 12, 2025**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Metrowest YMCA**

**282 Old Connecticut Path**

**Framingham, MA**

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

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**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

Dr. Kimberly D. Lucas

Jennifer James Price

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

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

Cheryl Travers

Jamella Lee (via phone)

George Atanasov (via phone)

Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga (via phone)

**MINUTES**

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chair Belsito provided opening comments and welcomed Rick MacPherson, President and CEO of Metrowest YMCA, and Heidi Osgood Kaufman, Social Impact and Government Relations Officer, Metrowest YMCA.

Mr. MacPherson welcomed the Board and discussed the Early Learning Center at the YMCA and expansion plans. Ms. Osgood Kaufman shared the mission of the YMCA and thanked EEC for their support and collaboration. She shared how the YMCA, their Early Childhood Community program, and the community, benefit from support and partnership with EEC.

Chair Belsito thanked Mr. MacPherson and Ms. Osgood Kaufman for their hospitality in hosting the meeting. Chair Belsito provided an overview of the agenda.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler provided welcoming comments and thanked the Metrowest YMCA for hosting the meeting. Secretary Tutwiler thanked Commissioner Kershaw, Director Maria Mossaides from the Office of the Child Advocate, and their respective teams for their work on the Strategic Trauma Responsive Early Education Training (STREET) Initiative and provided an

update regarding the program. Secretary Tutwiler addressed the concerns and impact of recent federal orders related to education. Secretary Tutwiler reiterated and reaffirmed the core values of EEC and the Department of Education.

### **Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Kershaw thanked Secretary Tutwiler for his comments and leadership. Commissioner Kershaw discussed guidance issued by the Attorney General's Office for service providers about serving immigrant residents

Commissioner Kershaw provided personnel updates. Commissioner Kershaw thanked Metrowest YMCA hosting the meeting and their partnership.

### **Statements from the Public**

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

Kelly Ford, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) and Parent Child Plus Manager at Making Opportunity Count, provided public comment in support of funding for CFCE programs. She shared the services provided by CFCE programs. Ms. Ford shared feedback from participants in the CFCE programs.

Daniella Ferrara provided public comment regarding her personal participation in the Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAAF) program and advocated for continued support of CFCE programs.

Ana Teresa Farias Training Coordinator for MetroBoston PDC Early Learners provided public comment regarding family child care rates and the reimbursement rate for children over two years old.

### **Routine Business:**

- Approval of Minutes from the January 15, 2025 Meeting – VOTE
  - Approved with Board Member Travers abstaining
- FY25 Human Resources Division Management Salary Adjustments – VOTE
  - Approved unanimously

### **Items for Discussion and Action:**

- Child Care Financial Assistance Regulatory Update – VOTE

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Tyreese Nicolas-Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement, Robert Orthman-Deputy General Counsel, and Stephany Collamore-Assistant

General Counsel, to discuss statutory requirements included in the FY25 budget regarding Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA). Assistant General Counsel Collamore discussed the reasons for the regulatory changes and related policies and procedures. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided a summary of the regulatory changes and clarified the proposed revisions are already in effect, but will be codified. Deputy General Counsel Orthman provided an overview of the timeline for the proposed CCFA regulation revisions. Deputy General Counsel Orthman detailed the Child Care Financial Assistance Regulations Motion. Board Member Lucas, Deputy General Counsel Orthman, and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the timeframe for public comment.

- Vote on Child Care Financial Assistance Regulations Motion
  - Approved unanimously
- FY26 Healey-Driscoll Budget Proposal Overview

Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the FY26 budget proposal recently released by the Governor. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted the key areas in the budget proposal that support the Gateway to Pre-K agenda. Commissioner Kershaw detailed additional budget items included outside the FY26 budget line items in the proposed Fair Share Supplemental budget and in cross-secretariat line items. Commissioner Kershaw compared the FY26 budget proposal and funding allocated in the FY25 budget. Board Member Price underscored Commissioner Kershaw's comments regarding funding for the Pathways Programs and Secretary Tutwiler expressed continued commitment to the programs. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the timeline for the FY26 Budget approval process. Chair Belsito commented on the FY26 budget proposal's commitment to early education.

- Child Care Financial Assistance Caseload Trends

Commissioner Kershaw discussed recently implemented changes and transitions affecting CCFA caseloads and stressed that the data is continuously updated. Commissioner Kershaw shared data related to CCFA caseloads over time from FY20 through FY25 and highlighted how recent changes affected caseload. She detailed CCFA caseloads by program type. Commissioner Kershaw discussed data related to the waitlist for CCFA and clarified the process for checking eligibility. Chair Belsito expressed appreciation for the data collection work and increased ability to inform decision making. Co-Chair Moeller and Commissioner Kershaw discussed how the data informs and highlights the need for accessibility and resources.

- Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program Update

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development, Program Support and Innovation, Adrienne Murphy-EEC Director of Data Analytics, and Ashley White-EEC Director of Research, to provide an update regarding the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided background information on C3 and highlighted how the program has changed over time related to program stability, workforce supports, and family access. Director Murphy shared data related to the growth of licensed programs and how the recently implemented formula changes have impacted growth. Director Murphy discussed growth of licensed system capacity by program,

region and by child opportunity index areas. Director Murphy shared trends related to C3 participation rates by month, highlighting the impact since the formula changes. Director Murphy provided an overview of responses to the August 2024 C3 survey. Director White shared survey data related to how programs report spending C3 funds by program type. Director White discussed survey data related to educator wages and benefits by program type. Director White highlighted identified trends related to open educator positions and turnover rates by educator role. Board Member Price clarified about the source of the personnel data.

Director White shared data related to tuition increases and highlighted differences in the data for center-based and family child care (FCC) programs. Director White discussed how programs report providing financial support to families beyond CCFA. Board Member Lucas clarified the types of programs included in the turnover rate data. Board Member Lucas expressed interest in data related to opening and closings and related to assistants for FCC programs.

Board Member Lucas and Director Murphy discussed non-workforce related expenditures for FCCs and how recent capital funding for FCCs could impact those expenditures. Board Member Lucas, Chair Belsito and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the challenge of collecting data related to salaries for FCCs and potential ways the Inter-Agency Taskforce can assist in that effort. Chair Belsito and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed how the predictability of C3 funding will continue to influence salaries and benefits. Director White thanked the programs who participated in the survey. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an overview of the goals related to the implementation of the FY24 revised C3 formula. Director Murphy shared early data related to funding distributed per child slot and highlighted that the new formula is working as intended. Deputy Commissioner Bowne shared next steps for future formula changes and revisions to C3 regulations. Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed potential future formula changes and emphasized that stability will be maintained with any changes. Board Member Lucas, Associate Commissioner Murphy, and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed program demographics across COI levels and the need for equity for implementation of the formula related to housing.

- IT Modernization: Family and Educator Portals

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jessi Murray-EEC Chief Product Officer, Ken Klau-EOE Senior Portfolio and Program Manager, and Kristyn Berry-EEC Educator Experience Product Owner, to provide an update regarding IT modernization efforts related to family and educator portals. Ms. Murray shared challenges with EEC's current IT systems and future goals to modernize the systems. Mr. Klau explained the development process for IT modernization and Ms. Murray emphasized that EEC is focused on a human-centric design process to benefit families, educators, and providers. Ms. Murray provided an overview of efforts to modernize the CCFA IT systems for families and providers. Ms. Murray shared goals for the family and educator portals and discussed potential enhancements that will be influenced by user feedback. Commissioner Kershaw commented on plans to update the Board on the credentialing system and how that relates to the educator portal. Chair Belsito, Commissioner Kershaw, and Ms. Murray discussed the timeline for implementation of both portals and their status. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the funding source for portal development. Board Member Price, Commissioner Kershaw, and Ms. Murray discussed integrated eligibility systems and portal compatibility with other state agencies. Co-Chair Moeller and Ms. Berry discussed the process to receive and implement feedback from external stakeholders. Board Member Lucas and Ms.

Murry discussed the process to identify user testers. Board Member Lucas expressed appreciation for the current work on IT modernization and data collection.

Chair Belsito provided closing comments.

Meeting Adjourned 3:50PM