**Board of Early Education and Care**

**February 14, 2023**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**The Community Group**

**190 Hampshire Street**

**Lawrence, MA 01840**

[https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https*3A*2F*2Furldefense.com*2Fv3*2F__https*3A*2Fwww.youtube.com*2Fc*2FEECMass__*3B!!CUhgQOZqV7M!mtJGkDA0V8yVgg2uKSG9uy90hzVOfMC6kxew8RLmPytYEKM5G63U2wNQX5lmit0oRma9LJJQvSy2Xg9khjIXdBkRMbjsJqM*24&data=05*7C01*7Cmike*40renvisioning.com*7Cfc2fcdfea44a4844760708da926316e2*7C804f5616b15149f0831435a91562ab97*7C0*7C0*7C637983251547746626*7CUnknown*7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0*3D*7C3000*7C*7C*7C&sdata=GfmZaBZpVTD29gjgCI6wqLvtPwwz9k3Ct84ytJS62uk*3D&reserved=0__;JSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUl!!CUhgQOZqV7M!nAONvpYnuUFeIIGmPyWAYzixbXXP4opicM2oKiaL2PxTSq3vmDXa1fDb49UwAzr-myowXZhp4oTO75KqUO9_ZCMBwQ$)

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

Paul Belsito, Chairperson

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Acting Commissioner

Jamella Lee

Maria Gonzalez Moeller

George Atanasov

Cheryl Travers

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

Stephanie M. Curenton, Ph.D. (via phone)

Mora Segal (via phone)

Linda D. Sagor, M.D., M.P.H (via phone)

Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga (via phone)

**MINUTES:**

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chairperson Belsito welcomed the Board, guests and thanked The Community Group for hosting and EEC staff for facilitating the meeting. Chairperson Belsito welcomed new Board member Dr. Stephanie Curenton, who introduced herself. Chairperson Belsito discussed today’s agenda, which will focus on workforce opportunities and initiatives.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Acting Commissioner Kershaw thanked the Board and The Community Group in Lawrence for hosting the meeting. Acting Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged EEC’s Family Access and Engagement team who have been working with local community and family engagement grantees to set up facilitated play spaces for migrants and families experiencing homelessness in a temporary shelter at Fort Devens. Acting Commissioner Kershaw provided an update on EEC’s COVID response. Acting Commissioner Kershaw discussed the forum scheduled for Thursday, February 16, 2023 via Zoom to receive public comment related to the child care financial assistance regulations. Acting Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the procurement for child care resource and referral agencies and stated that the RFR will be posted before the next Board meeting. Acting Commissioner Kershaw provided personnel updates. Acting Commissioner Kershaw highlighted that the next Board meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2023 at EEC’s office in Boston.

**Statements from the Public**

Chairperson Belsito stated that public comment was received from Family Services of Central Massachusetts regarding their Project Flourish program.

Emily Murray, CFCE Coordinator from Beginning Bridges, stated it was her goal to humanize the data previously discussed at Board meetings. She shared feedback from families who participate in the CFCE program and discussed how the CFCE programs positively impact working families who struggle to provide childcare and preschool for their children. Ms. Murray stated that she has worked with the grant program for 22 years and stated family needs have changed drastically. She shared an anecdote about a family who has benefitted from their child experiencing play in a community setting. Ms. Murray discussed the need for increased funding for CFCE programs, as there are increased needs for supporting families, especially in the area of maternal mental health. Ms. Murray stated that funding for CFCE programs has been level funded for the tenth year in a row and she asked the Board to prioritize increased funding for CFCE program and to work with DESE and other strengthening partnership organizations to permanently fund the critical community work. She provided written materials to the Board.

Chairperson Belsito thanked Ms. Murray for grounding the work and humanizing the data and stated her written materials would be distributed.

Natalia Fernandes from CFCE North Shore echoed Ms. Murray’s comments. She provided an overview of CFCE’s work and the communities they serve. Ms. Fernandes discussed ways that increased funding would impact the communities and families that her program supports.

Laura Perille from Nurtury Early Education welcomed Secretary Tutwiler and thanked Acting Commissioner Kershaw, the Chair, and Board members for the opportunity to speak on broader points that impact the business before the Board. Ms. Perille provided an overview of Nurtury and the communities they serve. Ms. Perille discussed the current state of the childcare staffing crisis and encouraged the Board to continue to address the funding challenges with the upcoming budget. Ms. Perille highlighted the need to continue C3 funding alongside increased investment in subsidy rates and the subsidy system to continue EEC’s mission of centering the most vulnerable families and children. Ms. Perille expressed support of the proposed subsidy regulations and stated further changes are needed to reduce regulatory and procedural barriers while supporting educators. Ms. Perille expressed support for Greater Boston Legal Services recommendations.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler welcomed the Board and thanked everyone for the candor and guidance during his transition into his role as Secretary. He discussed his framework for thinking about the path ahead for early education, K-12, and higher education which involves the intentional use of organizing principles to fundamentally transform opportunities and experiences at all levels. Secretary Tutwiler stated he will share more on the organizing principles and the FY24 budget in the weeks to come.

**Routine Business:**

* Approval of Minutes from January 10, 2023 Meeting – VOTE

Approved with Dr. Stephanie Curenton abstaining

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

Acting Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the agenda and welcomed Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Supports Jocelyn Bowne, Senior Associate Commissioner for Workforce Development Ellen Grondine and Wendy Pierson, EEC Workforce Liaison to provide updates on workforce efforts. Acting Commissioner Kershaw highlighted that the agency is working on two parallel tracks to support the workforce through long term professionalization of the field with credentials and compensation which involves partnering with Higher Education and through the urgent need to build the workforce pipeline.

* Updates on Early Education & Care Workforce Efforts

Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an overview of the topics that will be discussed. Deputy Commissioner Bowne shared that EEC is currently in the planning phase of a new credentialing system, the goal of which is to map out career pathways from novice to expert. She discussed current innovations to address the urgent workforce capacity challenges, highlighting the early educator pilot and supports for clear pathways into the field.

* + Defining a Career Pathway and Credentialing System
    - Current State: Minimum Hiring Requirements

Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided background on the qualification process and discussed feedback received from the field during the COVID pandemic, which lead to the development of minimum hiring requirements. She discussed the key changes that were made to qualification requirements and operations, which led to increased flexibility in hiring. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the key considerations for minimum hiring requirements and discussed the feedback from field. She highlighted that based on that feedback, increased technical assistance has been provided to programs through consultation with EEC’s Teacher Qualification Unit and through the Professional Pathways website run by Neighborhood Villages. Deputy Commissioner Bowne also highlighted updates to the Strong Start Management System.

Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed feedback from the field regarding the loss of professional recognition and efficiency without EEC certification. Deputy Commissioner Bowne shared that EEC is looking into the opportunity to stage optional certification for educators, which will continue along with minimum hiring requirements.

Acting Commissioner Kershaw provided context of the decision-making process regarding the changes to teacher qualification and current feedback from programs regarding teacher certifications. She acknowledged the value in professionalism of staff and stated that an improved certification system is being developed and it is strongly recommended to continue the minimum hiring requirements while that new system is being developed. Chairperson Belsito expressed appreciation for the update.

* + - Credentialing System Development

Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the timeline and next steps relative to defining career pathways and the credentialing system. She discussed the immediate plan to hire a vendor to develop the verification requirements for the director level credential, while maintaining the use of minimum hiring requirements for stability and flexibility. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the short-term goal of developing the strategy for a staged relaunch of certifications in the next six months, focusing on designing and deploying new I.T. systems to support the immediate and the long term. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the long-term goal to socialize the revised pathway and credential, revise the regulations, roll out the new pathway and credentials as a staged launch and build the educator registry in the next 12-24 months. Acting Commissioner Kershaw committed to working with the field during the launch to ensure continuity.

* + - Access to Higher Education

Senior Associate Commissioner for Workforce Development Ellen Grondine provided an overview of the career pathway and credential developments. She discussed the Career Pathways grant that provides funding to 15 community colleges and highlighted the support services provided by Neighborhood Villages, noting that there have been over 700 inquiries to Neighborhood Villages regarding coursework credentials. Acting Commissioner Kershaw commented that through EEC’s work with Neighborhood Villages, it’s clear there are more opportunities to work with community colleges to reach early educators and update and modernize the current ECE scholarship program. Acting Commissioner Kershaw stated that EEC has an economic mobility agenda for early education workers which includes credentialing, compensation and access to higher education. Senior Associate Commissioner Grondine discussed the partnership between EEC, DHE, and Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC). Acting Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Wendy Pierson, EEC Workforce Liaison from MACC. Ms. Pierson provided background information regarding the mission of MACC and stated it is MACC’s goal to partner with EEC to expand and improve access to training and pathway opportunities. Board member Moeller commented that

Chairperson Belsito asked for additional information regarding the scholarship program to be shared at the next Board meeting.

Acting Commissioner Kershaw introduced Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement Tyreese Nicolas, who provided an overview of the Early Childhood Educator Pilot. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared that through $10M allotted in the final FY23 budget, the Early Educator Pilot program was launched to provide financial assistance to income eligible early child care workers through the existing subsidy system. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas highlighted that the income threshold is up to 85%. She discussed the goals of the pilot regarding recruitment and retention and to provide assistance to families to offset childcare costs. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared that 1,181 children have been reached in one month through the pilot program. Acting Commissioner Kershaw clarified that in order for programs to participate in the program, they have to sign voucher agreements to participate in the subsidy system. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared that to date, 70 new providers have signed up to receive subsidies. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed insights that are being learned through the pilot program. Acting Commissioner Kershaw thanked the childcare resource agencies for their partnership with this program and shared feedback from programs who participated.

Deputy Commissioner Bowne stated that more information will be shared regarding the public information campaign and job board project as they develop. Director of Program Innovation and Supports Sarah Volkenant discussed proposed FCC start up pilot supports and efforts to offer a comprehensive package of support to bring family child care educators into the workforce. Ms. Volkenant discussed the goal of FCC Start Up Pilot strategy.

* + Innovations in Motion
    - Partner Panel: Family Child Care Capacity Building

Acting Commissioner Kershaw welcomed panel members Liz Sheehan Castro, Director of Massachusetts Child Care Training Fund, Melinda Weber, VP of Shared Services at United Way of Mass Bay, Mayra Rosado Senior Director for Family Childcare Network at Nurtury, and Laura Perille, President and CEO of Nurtury. Ms. Perille discussed Nurtury’s mission and provided an overview of the services they provide and the families they serve. Ms. Perille shared that Nurtury is launching a family child care incubator to address the issue of providers in need of space to run a child care program. Ms. Rosado provided details regarding the concept of the program, sharing that Nurtury will be making transitional space available for between 6-24 months for three FCC educators who want to join the field but do not have space available. Nurtury will also provide streamlined support to the educators to allow them to open their own program. Ms. Rosado discussed the additional supports needed from EEC, including guidance from licensing and involvement from the financial assistance team. Ms. Rosado stated that if this pilot is successful, it will stand as a replicable model for programs across the Commonwealth. Ms. Rosado discussed funding and the cost model for the pilot program. Ms. Perille shared that the pilot program is being run in a space that closed due to lack of staffing. Acting Commissioner Kershaw expressed support for the program and thanked Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations Andrew Rome and Regional Director Kelly Meehan for their support and guidance.

Ms. Weber provided background information about United Way’s Shared Services Program which provides a continuum of support for family child care educators to build strong businesses with 12 week workshops delivered by peer instructors and are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Mandarin. The workshops guide individuals through the licensing system, provide business training to educators to maximize profitability, provide training for developmental screening, teach marketing and website development and technical assistance for wealth building.

Ms. Castro provided background information regarding the SEIU Education and Support Fund, which reaches approximately 700 family child care educators who are members of SEIU 509 bargaining unit and serve children with subsidies or vouchers statewide per year. Ms. Castro discussed the funding model. Ms. Castro discussed the trainings and workshops that the fund provides in Spanish and Portuguese. She highlighted the entry-level courses to ground educators in the work and the leadership pathways to support educators in advancing the quality of their programs. Ms. Castro discussed the importance of peer mentorship.

Acting Commissioner Kershaw thanked the panel for their insights. Chairperson Belsito acknowledged the importance of the panels’ work to think differently, create access and breakdown barriers in a mixed delivery system.

* + - Partner Panel: Recruitment & Retention

Director of Program Innovation and Sarah Volkenant provided an overview related to the workforce crisis in center-based programs and shared that it is EEC’s goal to build the supply and of the workforce while attending to the system building and infrastructure necessary to retain staff. Ms. Volkenant discussed the supportive pathways that are necessary to support entry and ongoing professional development. Acting Commissioner Kershaw stated that today’s conversation with the panel will discuss innovative strategies while exploring EEC’s role in supporting center-based programs. Acting Commissioner Kershaw welcomed panel members Binal Patel, Chief Program Officer at Neighborhood Village, Christine Traynor Head of Recruiting for Little Sprouts, Mandy Townsend Senior Vice President of Employer Engagement for JVS Boston Barbara Gallagher, Chief Operating Officer at The Community Group, and Katie Graham, Chief Strategy Officer at The Community Group. Ms. Graham welcomed the Board and provided an overview of The Community Group’s programs and services. Ms. Graham provided details about The Community Group’s mentor/mentee program, which currently has 24 mentees enrolled who are all expected to be offered positions in center-based programs upon graduation from the program, as well as 26 people in a teacher training cohort in partnership with Urban College. Ms. Gallagher provided the history of the development of The Community Group’s mentor/mentee program and provided examples of the components that made up their teaching training program. Ms. Gallagher shared how the mentor program was developed as a community-wide approach to solving childcare staffing issues while professionalizing the field. Ms. Gallagher discussed the funding sources for the program and discussed how the program has evolved. Acting Commissioner Kershaw inquired how this program could be scaled or maintained at a community level and Ms. Gallagher shared that financial support in the form of EEC workforce grants and community grants. Ms. Patel added there is an opportunity for EEC to consider how regulations and certifications for mentor/mentee role could operate within a pathway.

Ms. Townsend provided information on JVS’ childcare pipeline pilot, which recruits and screens individuals with employer partners and allows people to work while receiving training. Ms. Townsend shared how the pipeline has a hierarchy which allows people to see their career trajectory and highlighted that there is an 83% retention rate with the pipeline pilot program. JVS provides a Job Quality Benchmark Index which is a dataset of 65 childcare employers that helps employers to understand the field competitively by ranking them in a report based on five pillars identified by jobseekers. JVS also partners with Neighborhood Villages to provide job quality coaching. Ms. Townsend expressed support for the Early Childhood Educator Pilot while reminding the Board to be mindful of creating cliffs related to SVI and encouraged the Board to continue to support the pathway funding for community colleges.

Ms. Traynor provided feedback about Little Sprouts experiencing partnering with JVS and Neighborhood Villages and detailed initiatives that Little Sprouts has undertaken to improve staff retention. Ms. Traynor provided feedback on the minimum hiring requirements and shared that in 2022, Little Sprouts was able to certify 191 educators with the new requirements. Ms. Traynor shared frustrations with the BRC process and stated that EEC can better support programs by streamlining that process. Acting Commissioner Kershaw thanked the panel for their leadership and insights.

Ms. Patel detailed information about the Neighborhood Villages apprenticeship program, which has a Lead Teacher track and a Director track. She shared that the Lead Teacher program launched with 50 participants, which was twice the anticipated amount. Ms. Patel highlighted that this apprenticeship program is a 12-month non-college pathway towards a CDA with wraparound supports and a minimum wage floor for the apprentices. Ms. Patel further highlighted that the apprenticeship program is an Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development registered program and shared that EEC supports are needed during the registration process of applying to be a registered apprenticeship. Ms. Patel provided details regarding the Director apprenticeship program, which is the first in the state and the second in the country. Ms. Patel shared that 60% of participants are current directors and focuses on a mentorship model. Ms. Patel encouraged the Board to consider adding a mentor teacher level in the certification process.

Acting Commissioner Kershaw thanked the panel for their work and for informing the work of the agency. Acting Commissioner Kershaw stated that these conversations will continue at another meeting of the Board’s working groups. Chairperson Belsito thanked the panelists for sharing and partnering with the agency.

Chairperson Belsito made a motion to adjourn the public Board meeting into executive session to discuss personnel related matters, and indicated that the Board would not reconvene in open session following the conclusion of the executive session. The motion was approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30PM