

EEC February Board Meeting Public Comment

| Name/Organization   | Topic/Comment   |
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| <p>Darlene J Howland, Wellesley Community Children's Center</p> | <p><b>Agency Staffing:</b> I continue to ask that the Teacher Qualification Unit receive additional personnel to address the backlog of applications that they face. Teachers who apply for credentials in February have been told that the office is still processing October applications. Please budget for at least one additional staff member for the unit or connect with a local university to establish an internship in the office, to save the state money, but ensure that the work is being done.</p> <p>Please do something about this untenable situation.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>   |
| <p>Andrew Kessler, ADK Daycare Corp</p>                         | <p><b>Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3):</b><br/>Thank you for taking the time to read my comments and I apologize that I am not able to share my comments in person.</p> <p>The reason for my comments is regarding the c3 grants. I do appreciate what the c3 grants have allowed my centers to do and the increase in compensation it has allowed me to provide my staff. In addition, I do appreciate the fact that EEC has set an amount and locked it in for centers to be able to budget.</p> <p>However, I was extremely disappointed to find out this month that when I went to rectify my amount was not going to increase even though I was able to enroll a supportive (voucher) child. I was told that the rates were set in November and would be re-looked at again in April. I suppose shame on me for not paying closer attention to the rules. I have been a voucher provider for over a year now and was just able to accept this child as of February 1st, 2025. Not that I have not been trying for some time to enroll other voucher children but due to my staffing, open slots, and inquiries, this was the first one I was able to make work.</p> |

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|                        | <p>So now I am anticipating a bump in grant money that is not coming. So I am not exactly sure how ethical this situation is. As a provider who may have had voucher children in November but now does not, is still getting a larger percentage of C3 monies where providers like me who do now have voucher children are not getting a fair piece of the pie.</p> <p>I hope the board recognizes that taking in voucher children is often more challenging than full fee families not only on the administrative side but often on the family dynamic side as well. I am certainly going to continue to accept supportive slots when I can do so as it is the correct thing to do. I hope that EEC will reconsider the decision not to look at supportive slots on a monthly basis when rectification takes place. Not only to reward those providers who are taking the financial hit by taking in a supportive slot that pays less than the full fee but also ensures that providers that once were taking supportive slots are still doing so.</p> <p>I think the way to ensure that C3 does not run out of funds while still keeping a consistent month-to-month amount is to have a slush fund that can be dipped into to increase those that end up getting a supportive slot and can be refilled from those centers that no longer have supportive slots. Should C3 have monies remaining in the slush fund at the end of the fiscal year, those monies can be distributed amongst all providers as a bonus payment.</p> <p>I thank you for your time to consider what I am proposing and hopefully changes can be made to ensure that the grant funds are being distributed ethically month to month and that providers who make the sacrifice to take supportive slots are not being penalized for having open enrollment as is the case currently.</p> |
| Kathy Bowden, Fun Club | <p><b>Strong Start:</b> I hope this email finds you doing well! I would like to take this opportunity to</p>   |

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|   | <p>discuss Strong Start. I am the After School Director for the Town of Danvers. I have been in my position for over 25 years. I strongly feel that the Strong Start training needs to be changed for After School Programs. I am one of those Directors that likes to be over staffed, but with staff doing trainings for infant, toddlers, and preschoolers I find very unnecessary as we are not working with this age group. With the training being heavy with Pre-K enrichment I believe that there should be 2 different trainings, one geared towards infant, toddlers, and Pre-K and the other towards school aged children.</p> <p>After School trainings should be about how to deal with children who have special needs, behavioral challenges and how to deal with other things they might experience/experienced at home i.e.: parents separating/divorce, trauma, filing with DCF. For longtime employees there should be an option to do a refresher course or at least update new trainings.</p>        |
| Cecile Tousignant, M.S., Child Tools Consulting | <p><b>Program Quality:</b> Commissioner Kershaw and Board Members</p> <p>According to the NIEER January 31, 2025 newsletter, “Multiple states have moved to “address the childcare crisis” by decreasing standards—waiving teacher qualifications requirements and increasing class sizes and child-to-staff ratios”.</p> <p>And further, “The real problem, what parents find challenging, is finding quality care that enhances learning and development at prices they can afford. If states want to solve this problem, they need to get more money, not more children, into each room by raising subsidies to parents and increasing compensation so that we can attract and retain more capable adults as caregivers and teachers.”</p> <p>Being in the industry in one capacity or another, I’ve traveled many early childhood landscapes in MA since 1975 from Commissioners to policies to approved curricula and so on. Somewhere along the way, we’ve lost EEC qualified early educators with bachelor and</p> |

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|  | <p>master's degrees who have migrated to the K-12 system where compensation tops what our system offers. Still, bachelor and master degree graduates are not paid on a par with the same benefits that DESE offers their employees.</p> <p>Where have our QRIS measurement tools gone? Why are we approving as "qualified" adults with less than minimum EEC teacher status and which adults enter the early childhood classroom with little to no understanding of child development or developmentally appropriate practice?</p> <p>C3 as law is progress, thanks to the Common Start Coalition's efforts. But we are operating in crisis mode and failing our young children. It seems the department is motivated by the political winds where we thus seem to operate hither-thither. Where is the creative thinking and planning we enjoyed with the ECAC movement offered through (the then) DOE until 2008 and by Commissioner Sherri Killins and Commissioner Sam Aigner-Treworgy, both who had to leave their appointments so abruptly? Please, let's reconsider our priorities and maintain our standards.</p> |
| Lynn Mazurenko   | <p><b>Ratios:</b> We all know that monthly grant money won't last forever and many home daycares will not be able to remain open without financial assistance unless something changes.</p> <p>We also know that there is an overwhelming demand for infant care in Massachusetts. I currently have over 15 families on my waitlist looking for infant care and the demand will only get greater when home daycares start to close. The only obvious solution is to allow an increase in child to staff ratios, specifically infant ratios. Some of us feel our specialty is infant care and are confident we can provide quality care for more than 3 infants on our own. If a provider can show that their evacuation plans are up to par for multiple infants I feel you should seriously consider allowing us an increase in the number of children we can care for.</p>  |
| Kelley Ford, Making Opportunity Count CFCE & PC+ Program | <p><b>CFCE:</b> Hello Commissioner Kershaw and fellow EEC board members.</p>  |

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|  | <p>My name is Kelley Ford and I am a Director for the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement and Parent Child Plus program for Making Opportunity Count in central Mass servicing 10 towns. Today I am speaking on behalf of the CFCE programs across the commonwealth as we would like to express our gratitude for the funding we receive and to share with you some ways we are using this funding to provide programs that support families living within our communities.</p> <p>At our core CFCE's address the developmental, social, emotional and community needs of the youngest residents in the commonwealth and their caregivers to foster healthy development, reduce caregiver isolation and promote early learning and literacy success. For most families, CFCE programs are the only EEC program to touch their lives. Our program attendees are foster families, grandparents as daytime caregivers and those raising grandchildren, stay at home dads or moms, one parent families and those living intergenerationally and working parents balancing work and child rearing. First time parents and parents with multiple children who for years seek, enjoy and need the support we can offer them. From the rural towns, suburbs and downtown cities</p> <p>Our programs are centered around child development and interactions through play and oh</p> <p>what fun we are having. We discuss ages and stages of development, provide a safe place for the adults to share experiences with parenting, home life, challenges and wins. All the</p> <p>while we are providing referrals for food and fuel assistance, offering parent workshop opportunities about potty training, self-regulation, nutrition, and school readiness. We are</p> <p>singing and dancing and laughing with children and adults and they are coming back time and time again for this support. CFCE programs offer unique community connections that each one develops their own way. We are always reaching out for those connections and</p> |
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|  | <p>are valued in our communities as we need to be valued with continued funding. Our funding priorities continue to be workforce, program stability and family access. I would like to end with some statements and feedback from caregivers that attend our playgroups. Thank you for listening to my testimonial.</p> <p>* When I say the playgroups have honestly been a lifesaver for me, I am being completely serious.</p> <p>With no local family support system, I felt alone and isolated. With the playgroups I was able to get out of the house and get my child started with social interactions. I learned about and signed up for Parent Child+ through playgroups and that helped me better understand early childhood development as well as providing educational challenges and puzzles for my now toddler. The CFCE programs are amazing and I am so thankful for all the advice, friends, and activities that came with my family attending playgroups. Thank you</p> <p>* Having a positive place with structure where I can take my young children, playgroup( the only place locally where I can do that) greatly reduces the stress load at home. Often during stressful times I refer back to the playgroup and use that as a guide of positive behavior in a challenging time regarding their behavior. The kids know what is expected of them at playgroup and I ask them if this or that behavior would be ok there. And then they recognize their own behaviors and modify them accordingly. So the stress load at home becomes reduced thanks to our time at playgroup</p> <p>*MOC programing has provided my children and family with positive growth opportunities. When reading or conducting learning activities, I now know what I should be focusing on with my children. I thank MOC for this.</p> <p>* The program opened my eyes to just how much more I can be doing to expand the</p> |
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|  | opportunities to learn for my children.<br>*My child would be behind on his milestones if<br>he didn't start coming to playgroups. |
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