

Board of Early Education and Care
June 12, 2024
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Department of Early Education and Care, Central Office
50 Milk Street, 14th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
<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
Nicki Ruiz de Luzuriaga
George K. Atanasov
Linda D. Sagor, M.D., M.P.H.
Jamella Lee
Carolyn Kain, J.D., Designee for HHS Secretary Kate Walsh
Cheryl Travers (via phone)

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chair Belsito provided brief opening remarks.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Tutwiler thanked the Board members for their commitment. Secretary Tutwiler acknowledged Commissioner Kershaw's receipt of the National Future of Human Services Award from the American Public Health Services Associations. Secretary Tutwiler expressed appreciation for the Legislature for their continued support for Early Education and Care and provided an update on the status of the budget. Secretary Tutwiler provided an update regarding the Fair Share Tax Revenue program and C3 funds. Secretary Tutwiler expressed continued commitment for C3 funding. Secretary Tutwiler provided an update regarding the Early Education and Care Taskforce.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Kershaw extended gratitude to Board Members Belsito, Lee and Luzuriaga for their commitment to the Board. Commissioner Kershaw clarified that she accepted the National Future of Human Services Award on behalf of several agencies in Massachusetts and it was awarded to all six New England states. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the Requests for Proposals related to contracts for income eligible and priority population providers. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the contract with SEIU 509 which represents family child care providers and the rate increases for family child care providers. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding increases to approved closure days for child care providers and upcoming communications to the field. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding workforce initiatives and the Early Child Care Scholarship. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding expansion grants for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI). Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the status of the cost study model to set reimbursement rates. Commissioner Kershaw provided personnel updates and discussed recent partnerships with local universities, including Boston University's Wheelock Education Policy Center, Harvard's Partnering in Education Research Fellowship and Harvard's Strategic Data Project Fellowship.

Statements from the Public

Chair Belsito acknowledged that public comments were received and distributed to the Board prior to the meeting.

Routine Business:

- Approval of Minutes from April 10, 2024 Meeting – VOTE
 - Approved with Board Member Atanasov abstaining.
- Approval of Board Meeting Dates for FY25 – VOTE
 - Approved with amendment of dates
- Approval of Commissioner’s Authority to Seek Funding and Create a Trust for Data Analysis – VOTE
 - Approved unanimously

Items for Discussion and Action:

- FY25 Budget Update

Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the status of the budget process. She discussed highlights from the budget proposals released by the Governor, the House and the Senate and detailed the funding sources for key investments. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the line items and funding levels for Child Care Financial Assistance and Family Engagement, Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) and Workforce and Program Supports. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted differences between the House and Senate budget proposals. Board Chair Belsito commented on the continued financial commitment to early education and care. Co-Chair Moeller and Commissioner Kershaw discussed how EEC’s priorities are reflected in the budget.

- Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program Update and Planning for FY25

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Support and Amy Checkoway-EEC Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, & Data to discuss EEC’s strategy and proposal for the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program in FY25.

Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Support provided an overview of the C3 Program and discussed how C3 funding has supported the field. Deputy Commissioner Bowne outlined goals for the C3 program for FY25 and discussed a two-stage implementation plan for the goals. Deputy Commissioner Bowne outlined the proposed C3 formula for FY25. Co-Chair Moeller, Deputy Commissioner Bowne and Commissioner Kershaw discussed variables that can affect the formula and how feedback from the field influences changes. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the proposed FY25 base rates for different program types and how they align with identified gaps between costs and revenues identified by the cost models. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted how the new rates differ from the current formula. Amy Checkoway-EEC Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, & Data outlined the proposed tiers for the C3 program and highlighted key adjustments made to the FY24 tiers. Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway summarized the proposed adjustments to the C3 program for FY25 and Deputy Commissioner Bowne explained changes to the CEO compensation threshold. Chair Belsito, Deputy Commissioner Bowne and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the ways that the EEC plan is responsive to issues identified during the budget process. Commissioner Kershaw, Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed how C3 funding affects affordability for parents. Chair Belsito, Co-Chair Moeller and Ms. Checkoway discussed the upcoming data collection survey.

- Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan –2024 CCDF Final Rule

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Support, Tyreese Nicolas-EEC Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement and Leah Jack-EEC Project Manager to discuss the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan.

Ms. Jack provided an overview of the scope and timeline for FY25-27 State Plan. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided background information and an overview of the CCDF State Plan. Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas explained that the State Plan is amended to reflect the ongoing work of the agency. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed how the State Plan aligns with EEC objectives related to family access, program stability, program quality and workforce supports. Deputy Commissioner Bowne highlighted the key initiatives in the State Plan. Ms. Jack discussed the various engagement opportunities for feedback and detailed the feedback that was received during the State Plan process. Ms. Jack provided an overview of the feedback as outlined in the memo that was provided to the Board prior to the meeting.

- Vote on Motion 2024-09 Approval of Commonwealth's Child Care Development Fund State Plan Process and Submission
 - Approved unanimously

- 2024 CCDF Final Rule

Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided background information on the CCDF Final Rule and explained the benefits of the Final Rule for families and providers. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the six requirements included in the Final Rule and the status of EEC's compliance with the requirements.

- Residential Regulation Reforms Update

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Margie Gilberti-EEC Associate Commissioner of Field Investigations, Tiffany Bassi-EEC ABA Licensing Supervisor, Susan Habchy-EEC Contracted ABA Project Manager, Tim Keane-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor and Kelly Buckley-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor to provide an update on reforms to the Residential Program Regulations.

Kelly Buckley-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor provided an overview of residential programs, the services they provide and how EEC regulations serve the involved populations. Ms. Buckley detailed the number of different types of residential programs that EEC licenses and the number of children served in the programs. She explained the funding and referral sources for the programs. Tim Keane-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor explained the agencies and organizations that EEC partners and collaborates with for regulatory oversight of residential programs. Mr. Keane detailed the purpose of the regulator revisions, highlighting that the regulations have not had a comprehensive revision since 1995. Margie Gilberti-EEC Associate Commissioner of Field Investigations discussed the overarching objectives that influence the revisions. Associate Commissioner Gilberti provided an overview of the areas of reform and Susan Habchy-EEC Contracted ABA Project Manager discussed the proposed key changes to the residential revisions. Commissioner Kershaw explained how thoughtful transparency will be central to the revisions. Board Members Ruiz, Kain and Sagor and Ms. Buckley discussed continuous quality improvement and how EEC's regulations and oversight interact with all the involved stakeholders. Ms. Buckley outlined opportunities for stakeholder engagement and feedback received to date. She shared the current status of the regulation revisions and outlined the planned next steps. Co-Chair Moeller and Mr. Keane discussed ways to increase capacity and workforce development and support challenges.

Chair Belsito provided closing remarks.

Meeting ended 3:36PM.