**Board of Early Education and Care**

**March 13, 2024**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Department of Early Education and Care, Central Office**

**50 Milk Street, 5th Floor**

**Boston, MA 02110**

[https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/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**

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Commissioner

Paul Belsito, Chair

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, Vice-Chair

Nicki Ruiz de Luzuriaga

George K. Atanasov

Mora Segal

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

**Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Not Present**

Stephanie M. Curenton, Ph.D.

Jamella Lee

Cheryl Travers

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

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chair Belsito provided opening remarks. Chair Belsito recognized Board Member Segal, who is attending her last meeting as a Board Member and thanked her for her contributions to the Board and for her service to the Commonwealth.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler thanked Commissioner Kershaw for her attendance at a Ways and Means Committee meeting at Greenfield Community College. Secretary Tutwiler thanked Board Member Segal for her service on the Board. Secretary Tutwiler discussed a recent visit to a family child care provider in Boston.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Kershaw discussed her attendance at the Joint Ways and Means Committee meeting. Commissioner Kershaw provided a budget update. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the alternative methodology to market rates and the cost study. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the procurement for Child Care Financial Assistance contracts. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) funding and upcoming information sessions for providers. Commissioner Kershaw provided staffing updates. Commissioner Kershaw provided information regarding next month’s Board meeting. Commissioner Kershaw thanked Board Member Segal for her contributions to the Board and wished her well. Board Member Segal thanked the Commissioner and the Board.

**Statements from the Public**

Michelle Haimowitz, Executive Director of Massachusetts Head Start Association, provided public comment regarding adjustments to FY24 C3 funding and planning for FY25 C3 funding. Ms. Haimowitz provided information about her organization and the services it provides. Ms. Haimowitz expressed gratitude and support for EEC’s prioritization of programs that serve vulnerable children and families, including Head Start, and encouraged the Board to continue that support.

Melissa Cole, Owner and Operator of Little Beginnings, a private pay center in Shrewsbury, shared information about the services her program provides and how C3 funding has benefited her program. Ms. Cole shared challenges she has faced as a small business owner and childcare provider. Ms. Cole shared how decreased FY24 C3 funding will affect her program and advocated for equitable adjustments for C3 funding.

Diane Shilder, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute, shared key findings and recommendations from a recent study designed to capture evidence about access to information for early childhood services and connections to services for families in the Commonwealth. Ms. Shilder noted that the views shared are not attributed to the Urban Institute, its Trustees, or funders.

Amy O’Leary, Executive Director of Strategies for Children, provided public comment in support of transitioning C3 funding from a stabilizing support to an operational support and shared how the funding has impacted childcare providers and families. Ms. O’Leary encouraged EEC to include members of the early childcare field in the planning process. Ms. O’Leary reflected on steps taken to stabilize the field during the COVID emergency and in the last few years.

Edna Cabral, a private childcare provider, shared how her program and the families she serves benefit from C3 grant funding and encouraged the Board to consider how cuts to C3 will affect the childcare field.

Chair Belsito acknowledged receipt of the report from the Urban Institute and stated that additional public comment was received and shared with the Board by email.

**Routine Business:**

* Approval of Minutes from February 14, 2024 Meeting – VOTE
	+ Approved unanimously.

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the agenda.

* Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Supports, Adrienne Murphy-EEC Director of Data Analytics and Amy Checkoway-EEC Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, & Data to share data and details about the C3 Grant program. Commissioner Kershaw stated that the Commonwealth is committed to continuing to support providers through C3 funding and highlighted difficulties faced in other states. Commissioner Kershaw discussed Governor Healey’s Gateway to Pre-K initiative.

Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an overview of the C3 program and shared data regarding C3 participation since July 2021. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed how the data collected as part of the C3 grant has been a critical support for the field. Ms. Checkoway shared information regarding providers who participated in the survey. Ms. Checkoway and Ms. Murphy shared data related to program stability. Chair Belsito and Ms. Checkoway discussed the social vulnerability index (SVI) and how it relates to the C3 funding formula. Board Members Segal and Moeller, along with Ms. Murphy and Commissioner Kershaw, discussed drivers of increased capacity and how to utilize the data to demonstrate the current role of C3 funding. Ms. Murphy shared data related to workforce supports. Vice Chair Moeller and Commissioner Kershaw discussed supports and assistance provided by family childcare systems.

Chair Belsito and Vice Chair Moeller expressed appreciation for the providers who participate in the C3 survey and for the EEC team who analyzes and conveys the data. Board Member Segal, Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed feedback received from programs regarding how loss of C3 funding would impact their operations. Board Member Segal, Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed efforts to collect data pertaining to program funding sources. Deputy Commissioner Bowne highlighted key takeaways from the C3 data.

Commissioner Kershaw provided an update on the status of C3 funding for FY24. Commissioner Kershaw detailed the proposed program adjustments and explained groups that will be affected by the adjustments in May and June 2024. Commissioner Kershaw detailed the levers and guiding principles for changes to the C3 program moving forward. Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga and Commissioner Kershaw discussed ways to incentivize providers to offer affordability measures. Chair Belsito, Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the timeline for the program adjustments and the upcoming information sessions. Board Member Segal inquired about the process for determining the program adjustments.

* Child Care Financial Assistance Program

Commissioner Kershaw introduced Tyreese Nicolas, Deputy Commissioner for Family Access and Engagement, and Bethanie Glass, Director of Financial Assistance.

* + Current Caseloads and Trends

Deputy Commissioner Nicolas reflected on measures taken to increase access to Child Care Financial Assistance in the past four years. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared data related to Child Care Financial Assistance caseload over time by program type and funding source, by age group and by form of assistance. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared data related to the current caseload and highlighted how caseloads increased following revisions to Financial Assistance Regulations implemented in October. Board Member Sagor and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed seasonal trends. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared data related to the Early Childhood Educators (ECE) pilot, and Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the ECE pilot program. Board Member Segal and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed plans to survey providers and families to gain insight into the impact of the pilot program. Board Member Atanasov and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed data collection related to the economic impact on families. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared next steps to sustain the full caseload and detailed how maintaining the full caseload will affect providers and families. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas emphasized that the waitlist for Child Care Financial Assistance is open, and families are encouraged to apply. Board Members Segal and Sagor, Deputy Commissioner Nicolas and Commissioner Kershaw clarified that the waitlist affects new income eligible families who qualify for Child Care Financial Assistance. Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed efforts to increase access for income eligible families.

* + Statewide Waitlist Overview

Ms. Glass provided an overview of the three Child Care Financial Assistance programs and explained how income eligible families access the program through a statewide waitlist. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas explained how the statewide waitlist is managed. Ms. Glass outlined the waitlist process. Commissioner Kershaw discussed future technology innovations that will modernize the waitlist system. Chair Belsito, Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the timeline of the family journey on the waitlist and the factors that can affect the timeframe. Commissioner Kershaw explained efforts taken to streamline the process for Family Access Administrators, families, and providers. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared data related to the current waitlist by region and status. Chair Belsito and Commissioner Kershaw discussed seasonal trends. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed next steps to improve the waitlist process.

Chair Belsito provided closing remarks.

Meeting concluded at 3:59PM.