

Board of Early Education and Care

May 13, 2026

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Key Programs

2000 West Park Drive, Suite 250

Westborough, MA 01581 <https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass>

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

Dr. Stephen Zrike, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Commissioner

Paul Belsito, Chair

Dr. Kimberly D. Lucas

Jennifer James Price

George Atanasov

Jamella Lee

Carolyn Kain, J.D., Designee for HHS Secretary Dr. Kiame Mahaniah

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

Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga (via phone)

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Not Present

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, Vice-Chair

MINUTES

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chair Belsito shared welcoming comments and thanked Key Program for hosting the meeting. He introduced Tammy Mello, President and CEO at Key Program. Ms. Mello provided welcoming remarks and shared information about the programs and services provided at Key. Ms. Mello talked about the private public partnership involved in updating the residential and placement regulations. Chair Belsito provided an overview of the agenda.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Zrike provided opening comments. Secretary Zrike shared his experience visiting an early child care program during Teacher Appreciation week and participating on the “9:30 call”. Secretary Zrike provided an update regarding the Inter-Agency Task Force.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Kershaw provided welcoming remarks and thanked Key Programs for hosting the meeting. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged EEC’s residential licensing team. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged Teacher Appreciation Week and discussed initiatives she participated in throughout the week. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged Mental Health Awareness Day. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the EEC’s IT modernization efforts, specifically the EEC Family Portal, Mychildcare.gov, and the EEC Professional Portal.

Commissioner Kershaw provided information about the upcoming June Board meeting.

Statements from the Public

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

Lesley Kinney, Division Director SMOC. Ms. Kinney shared information about the services SMOC provides to children and families. She provided public comment to advocate for support for early education and care by increasing funding to restore and expand CCFA.

Michelle Haimowitz, Executive Director, Massachusetts Head Start Association provided background information about Head Start and discussed the services provided by Head Start programs. Ms. Haimowitz discussed challenges faced by Head Start as the result of changes to Federal funding and policies and discussed how the changes are affecting vulnerable families.

Routine Business:

- Approval of minutes from April 8, 2026 Meeting – VOTE
 - Approved unanimously

Items for Discussion and Action:

- FY27 Budget Updates

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Eric Hansson-EEC Chief Financial Officer and Christel Lantin-EEC Budget Director to provide updates related to the FY27 budget. Ms. Lantin provided an overview of the budget process and discussed the status of the FY27 budget. Ms. Lantin shared highlights from the final budget from the House of Representatives and outlined how the House budget aligns and differs from the H.2 budget. Mr. Hansson and Ms. Lantin detailed funding in the FY27 budget by program. Ms. Lantin compared funding for General Fund line items in the H.2 and House budgets. Ms. Lantin discussed funding included in the FY26 Fair Share Supplemental budget. Ms. Lantin and Mr. Hansson shared next steps in the budget process. Mr. Hansson discussed how the Senate Ways and Means (“SWM”) budget proposal aligns with the H.2 budget. Commissioner Kershaw and Mr. Hansson detailed watch areas in the FY27 SWM budget proposal and explained the effects of the proposed funding levels. Board Member Price, Commissioner Kershaw, and Mr. Hansson discussed the potential impact of the SWM funding level for the Career Pathways Program.

- Informal Child Care (ICC) Rate Increase Proposal

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Tyrese Nicolas-EEC Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement, Ashley White-EEC Director of Research and Mr. Hansson to discuss Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care and Informal Child Care (ICC) rates. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared feedback related to FFN caregiver rates. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed

how FFN care operates within the EEC system. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed next steps for proposed revised rates for FFN and ICC. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed data related to ICC by caregiver type and location, by age, by region, and by funding source and income. Mr. Hansson and Ms. White detailed the current ICC caregiver daily rates and discussed the considerations for the proposed rate increases. Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas clarified federal regulations related to ICC. Ms. White outlined the proposed rate increases. Commissioner Kershaw compared the proposed ICC rates with current FCC rates. Chair Belsito and Commissioner Kershaw outlined next steps to approve the proposed rates. Board Member Kain, Deputy Commissioner Nicolas, and Commissioner Kershaw discussed how access to and affordability of afterschool care impacts ICC. Secretary Zrike, Commissioner Kershaw, Deputy Commissioner Nicolas, and Ms. White discussed potential impacts on the market. Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the process for families to access ICC. Board Member Lucas expressed appreciation for the focus on the quality of care provided, rather than the location of care provided. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas, Commissioner Kershaw, and Mr. Hansson discussed ICC in other states.

- Standards for the Licensure of Residential Programs, Regulation Revisions – VOTE

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Tim Keane-EEC Director of Residential and Placement Services, Erica Morin-EEC General Counsel, Kelly Buckley-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor, Miguel Ortega-EEC Residential and Placement Supervisor, and Susan Habchy Project Manager to discuss the revisions to the regulations for residential programs. Director Keane shared the primary roles of the revisions. Ms. Buckley detailed the key areas of reform. Mr. Ortega provided an overview of the process to implement the revisions. Commissioner Kershaw shared feedback received during the public comment period and how that feedback impacted the proposed implementation process and timeline. Attorney Morin presented the Motion for Approval of Final Amended Residential Program Regulations and Authorization to File the Final Amended Regulations with the Secretary of the Commonwealth for Publication. Board Members Sagor and Kain provided positive feedback on the revisions and reflected on the feedback received from providers and state agency partners related to the implementation process. Board Member Price offered suggested language to include in the revisions related to the promulgation date. General Counsel Morin and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the effective date of the revisions and EEC's efforts to partner with and support programs. Board Member Sagor further reflected on extending the implementation date based on feedback from programs. Board Members Atanasov, Lucas and Sagor, Attorney Morin, and Commissioner Kershaw discussed compliance, enforcement standards and regulatory authority for potential corrective actions for non-compliance. Secretary Zrike expressed support for the current implementation date and acknowledged concerns for misalignment. Board Member Sagor proposed an amendment to the Motion to extend the proposed date of implementation by 90 days to November 17, 2026. Board Members Lee, Kain, Atanasov, Lucas, Lee, Chair Belsito, Secretary Zrike and Director Keane discussed the potential impacts of extending the implementation date. Board Members Price, Kain and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the process and timelines for enforcement actions. Ms. Buckley clarified about the prioritization of support for programs to ensure compliance.

- Vote on Motion as Amended
 - No Votes
 - Secretary Zrike
 - Yes Votes
 - Board Member Atanasov
 - Board Member Sagor
 - Board Member Kain
 - Board Member Price
 - Board Member Lucas
 - Chair Belsito
 - Abstain
 - Board Member Lee
 - Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga

Chair Belsito thanked the Board for the discussion and the residential licensing team for their leadership.

- Family Child Care (FCC) Capacity Pilot

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Erin Craft-EEC Regional Director, Western Region, Marisol Rosado-Ledoux-EEC Regional Director, Central Region, Erin Feliciano-FCC Licensing Supervisor, Southeast and Cape Region, Allison Zolotor-FCC Licensing Supervisor, Western Region to discuss the Family Child Care (FCC) Capacity Pilot. Ms. Craft provided an overview of the legislative history and explained the FCC Capacity Pilot Program. Ms. Rosado-Ledoux discussed efforts to gather feedback on the pilot design. Ms. Feliciano shared criteria for programs to be eligible for participation in the pilot program. Ms. Zolotor explained the application process and selection criteria. Ms. Zolotor explained how the information gathered during the pilot program is intended to inform updates to regulations, policies and supports. Ms. Rosado-Ledoux provided an overview of the timeline and proposed next steps for the pilot program. Chair Belsito and Board Members Kain and Price shared positive feedback about the pilot program. Board Member Price, Ms. Zolotor, and Ms. Rosado-Ledoux discussed feedback from programs in support of the pilot program. Board Member Lucas provided positive feedback about the design of the pilot program and offered suggestions related to data collection.

Chair Belsito provided closing remarks.

Meeting ended at 4:00PM