**Board of Early Education and Care**

**November 8, 2023**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**2Gen Center at United Teen Equality Center (UTEC)**

**35 Warren Street, Lowell, MA 01852**

<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

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

Jamella Lee (via phone joined at 2:30PM)

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

Nicki Ruiz de Luzuriaga

Cheryl Travers

George K. Atanasov

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

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

Mora Segal

**Site Tour**

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chair Belsito welcomed the Board of Early Education and Care (the Board), thanked UTEC for hosting today’s meeting and provided an overview of the agenda. Chair Belsito introduced Greg Croteau-CEO of UTEC.

Greg Croteau-CEO of UTEC provided a brief history of UTEC and detailed the services they provide. Mr. Croteau thanked the Board and the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) for their partnership and encouraged the Board to prioritize the needs of the populations served by UTEC.

Chair Belsito and Commissioner Kershaw thanked Mr. Croteau and his team for their commitment to children and families in the community.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler commented on UTEC’s efforts to create conditions that will allow young people to realize their dreams.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Kershaw provided personnel updates. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding scheduled trainings for the recently implemented Child Care Financial Assistance Regulations. Commissioner Kershaw discussed EEC’s ongoing work with Housing and Livable Communities, the Department of Public Health, and community partners to support young children in shelters. Commissioner Kershaw congratulated Vice-Chair Maria Moeller for her Latino Excellence Award, given by the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus, and provided logistical information and anticipated topics of discussion for December’s Board meeting.

**Routine Business:**

* Approval of Minutes from October 11, 2023 Meeting – VOTE
  + Approved with Board member George Atanasov abstaining
* 2022 Annual Report – VOTE
  + Approved with Secretary Tutwiler abstaining

**Statements from the Public**

Chair Belsito stated that no members of the public signed in to provide public comment but acknowledged that the Board received additional public comment prior to the meeting that will be distributed.

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

* FY24 Child Care Capital Investments Planning Overview

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Supports, Jose Mendez-EEC Director of Child Care Business Operations & Facilities, and Neil J. Flynn-EEC Acting General Counsel to discuss the broad capital investment strategy for additional funding authorized by the Healey administration and included in the FY24 final state budget for capital investments. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided background information and an overview of the Early Education and Out-of-School Time (EEOST) Capital Grant Fund program and shared the FY23 grants awarded. Mr. Mendez and Commissioner Kershaw discussed current efforts to streamline and modernize the existing grant application process. Mr. Mendez outlined plans for FY24 child care facility investments utilizing EEOST funds provided through the state’s Capital Investment Plan and through FY24 Fair Share budget funds. Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga and Commissioner Kershaw discussed how additional funds will be allocated, focusing on the flexibility within the Fair Share funds to provide funding for family child care provider capital investments. Commissioner Kershaw and Mr. Mendez discussed EEC’s efforts to develop capital funding opportunities for family child care programs through a Request for Information. Chair Belsito, Commissioner Kershaw, and Mr. Mendez discussed the application approval process and additional funding streams that were utilized in FY23. Acting General Counsel Neil Flynn detailed the proposed regulatory adjustments needed to support the hybrid approach of funding both large and small scale EEOST capital fund awards and shared the timeline for revisions.

* + Early Education and Out-of-School Time (EEOST) Proposed Regulation Revisions for Public Comment -VOTE
    - Approved unanimously
* FY24 Child Care Financial Assistance – Reimbursement Rate Increases and Potential Reforms
  + Background and Context

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Supports and Amy Checkoway-EEC Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, & Data Analytics to provide background and context regarding the regulatory and statutory structure on the state and federal level for Child Care Financial Assistance Rates and next steps for EEC’s strategic approach to rate increases and reforms to the rate structure for the upcoming fiscal year. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided background information regarding the child care financial assistance reimbursement rates and explained the equal access provision of Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed the findings from the 2022 Market Rate Survey and the subsequent response by the Board, which included an historic rate increase. Ms. Checkoway provided an overview of the current daily reimbursement rates by region and provider type. Ms. Checkoway highlighted recent progress and initiatives taken to inform rate setting. Commissioner Kershaw provided context regarding the price limitation waiver. Board Member Ruiz and Ms. Checkoway discussed how rates interact with program tuition and Ms. Checkoway shared that tuition information is collected through the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grant data. Commissioner Kershaw and Board Member Curenton discussed requirements of the price limitation waiver. Ms. Checkoway shared key findings from the cost study, and Commissioner Kershaw noted that cost data findings will be shared at an upcoming Board meeting. Board Member Curenton and Commissioner Kershaw discussed how the cost study information will address inequities to providers and ensure equal access. Board Member Ruiz de Luzuriaga, Commissioner Kershaw, and Ms. Checkoway discussed differences in rates and costs across program types and how the budget structure for family child care programs was taken into consideration. Ms. Checkoway shared recommendations from the cost study analysis regarding potential future adjustments to the rate structure. Ms. Checkoway provided an update about the alternative methodology proposal that has been submitted to the Federal Office of Child Care (OCC) and shared next steps if it is approved. Board Member Sagor and Ms. Checkoway discussed OCC’s expectation regarding alternative methodologies. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed strategies for FY24 rate increases and reforms. Commissioner Kershaw provided a timeline for next steps and asked for feedback from the Board. Board Member Ruiz and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the different methods to measure the impact of significant rate increases on the child care market in order to understand options for different funding streams. Board Member Moeller and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the importance of differentiating the rates in a purposeful way to ensure equity and expand access for families.

* FY25 Budget Priorities

Chair Belsito provided opening remarks regarding EEC’s proposed FY25 Budget Priorities. Commissioner Kershaw stated that the Board received a detailed memo outlining the FY25 Budget Priorities and highlighted the continued priorities detailed in the memo.

Chair Belsito moved to approve the FY25 Budget Priorities and submit to the Secretary of Education

VOTE

* Approved unanimously

Chair Belsito provided closing remarks.

Meeting concluded at 3:15PM.