**Board of Early Education and Care**

**Tuesday, November 9, 2021**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Virtual Meeting**

NOTE: This meeting will be broadcasted over EEC’s YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/bt_wO5JIMXc>

**Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present**

Nonie Lesaux, Chairperson

James Peyser, Secretary of Education

Samantha L. Aigner-Treworgy, Commissioner of Early Education and Care (EEC) and Secretary to the Board

Carolyn Kain, J.D., Designee for HHS Secretary Marylou Sudders

Sheila Balboni

Paul Belsito

Jamella Lee

Nicki Ruiz

Mora Segal

**The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM.**

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

1. Department Updates - Discussion

2. Special Session of the Board: Case Examples on Workforce Competencies - Discussion

* Opening from the Chair
* Case Example Presentations
* Board Discussion

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chairperson Lesaux welcomed the Board and provided an overview of the agenda. The Chairperson expressed gratitude for the Commissioner’s guidance through a transition period of the pandemic with the recent FDA approval of the vaccine for children ages 5-11.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Peyser discussed the approval of the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5-11 and highlighted ways to locate vaccine sites for children and how communities and programs can request mobile vaccine service at vaxfinder.mass.gov. Secretary Peyser provided an update on ongoing budget discussions at federal and local levels, including an ARPA grant that was recently passed by the House of Representatives. This will be monitored and any updates that impact early education in Massachusetts will be shared.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy highlighted the impacts of the ongoing federal funding and how the funding could potentially impact our current mixed delivery model and pre-school expansion. She highlighted the parent fee model and discussed how our structure is in-line with federal guidelines. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy discussed the components of the federal package and how it aligns with our state level initiatives.

Chairperson Lesaux thanked the Commissioner for providing insight into federal funding.

**Routine Business:**

* Approval of minutes from October 12, 2021 Board Meeting – Vote: Approved, with 1 amendment that Nikki Ruiz was not present for the meeting.

Next, Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy provided departmental updates and updates regarding the ARPA grant. She highlighted that EEC is taking an innovative approach to funding and is moving from a 6-month grant structure to a 12-month grant structure. She stated that there will be more robust information to share at the December meeting and is currently meeting with advocates and stakeholders to understand priorities for FY22.

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy provided Key Grant Metrics updates showing monthly disbursements and projections as of 11/4/21.

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy also provided an update on enhancements to the ARPA grant and the extension of the funding through June 2022. She discussed the incentives to new providers and bonus payment structure to help compensate providers who take on operational expenses to leverage funding to support long term investments. She reported that the data is a snapshot of the impact of the funding and shared anecdotal stories of the impact on providers and children. The Commissioner shared that webinars will be scheduled regarding the emerging constructs and noted that enhancements are anticipated to be shared in January.

There was discussion regarding the ongoing conversation surrounding incentives and the consideration given to providers who have previously made investments into salary and workforce. The Commissioner shared that 93% of programs are making investments in salary and incentives to attract workforce and highlighted that programs that made prior investments will be considered.

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy discussed the educator goal in the strategic action plan. She pointed to the recording of last week’s meeting with the Joint Advisory and Workforce Council for a deeper conversation into the operational considerations.

The Commissioner stated that the strategic plan looked at compensation in an innovative way by viewing it as a sector business model question.

Next, Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy provided an update on educator and workforce initiatives. She highlighted that the goal is to sustain a pipeline of educators by building a profession where people can grow. The Commissioner provided an update on the status of the workforce initiatives including recruitment, higher ed programs, compensation, and career pathways. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy focused on the current status of the professional registry hub and shared that the system aligns with EEC licensing database to encompass all the EEC register supports that are currently offered. The Commissioner provided an overview of the roadmap for the registry roll-out. Phase 1 will be completed by the end of the year and will allow educators to create the digital filing cabinet. There was discussion regarding how data that will be collected from the registry will be vital to address trends.

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy provided an update on the credentialing pathway and highlighted that conversations are ongoing on the development of the pathway. She welcomed suggestions on thought partners to meet with as the conversations continue. The Commissioner discussed the challenges of the degree and work experience paths and how both pathways need to incorporate a thoughtful approach that validates knowledge and competency. She highlighted the challenges on how to design a validation process to capture competencies and how to balance capturing competencies without a burdensome task on EEC and educators while growing the workforce.

The was discussion regarding a high school diploma as a baseline for the pathways and if that credentialling is necessary. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy stated that the registry will allow for flexibility with CTE and it is important to consider the balance of supporting education along with experience. There was further discussion regarding multiple entry points to the field and how requirements map to increased quality of care.

BREAK UNTIL 2:05

**Case Example Presentation**

Chairperson Lesaux: Chairperson Lesaux welcomed the group back from break and thanked the Board for all their engaging and ongoing conversations. Chairperson Lesaux reflected on the current state of the workforce and the system building goals included in the strategic plan to address long standing goals with innovative strategies. She focused on scalable, person-centric solutions and public private partnerships. Chairperson Lesaux shared that today’s round table discussion was designed around two questions: 1) what can be learned from other sectors to build and document competencies and 2) where concepts can be translated into scalable system processes. Chairperson Lesaux introduced Bob LaPage, Assistant Secretary for Career Education.

Bob LaPage, Assistant Secretary for Career Education: Assistant Secretary LaPage discussed the current landscape of the workforce and how the challenges of the last few years have exacerbated existing issues, including providing career pathways to individuals in need of employment.

Assistant Secretary LaPage discussed historical challenges to training programs, and he acknowledged the need to increase capacity to address continuous turnover in the industry. He highlighted that developing new strategies for deployment is essential to form a network of providers and discussed the need to utilize state and federal funding to develop training programs. Assistant Secretary LaPage emphasized that clearly aligned and articulated pathways are key to getting to scale and the pathways need to be clear and reasonably achievable. Assistant Secretary LaPage encouraged continued partnership with MassHire to build awareness. Assistant Secretary Lapage discussed the need for integrated programs that strive for academic success while integrating industry credentials.

Chairperson Lesaux: Chairperson Lesaux thanked Assistant Secretary LaPage and introduced Professor Sam Intrator, Professor & Chair, Education and Child Stud Program and Director Co-Founder, Project Coach at Smith College.

Professor Intrator discussed a case study to highlight how to recognize and support alternative forms of talent in Education. Professor Intrator shared the mission of Project Coach, an out of school, sports-based, youth development program that prepares teens to coach, teach, and mentor elementary aged children in Springfield. Professor Intrator shared the story of a teen who participated in Project Coach and sought a career in education but faced many roadblocks and dead ends while pursuing his dream. Professor Intrator shared that his case study highlights how young people need structure, support, and preparation to allow them to bring their natural gifts and talent to their community.

Chairperson Lesaux thanked Professor Intrator and introduced Ramji Rhagaven, CEO, Pragya Systems, Ashsish Cowlagi, VP, Pragya Systems, and Alex Johnson, President and CEO Connecticut Capital Workforce partners who shared a case example presentation to illustrate how their partnership is providing competency-based training for entry-level certification into various roles.

Ramji Rhagaven discussed the challenges of typical workforce pathways facing learners, training providers, and employers. Mr. Rhagaven provided an overview of his company’s mission and detailed their AI-powered career compass approach to skilling displaced workers into high growth career pathways.

Alex Johnson provided an overview of Capital Workforce Partners and how their employer-led sector partnerships connect individuals with job opportunities. He discussed the challenges of operating during the pandemic and the opportunities that were created to expand their training offerings due to their partnership with Pragya Systems which allowed them to upskill a large number of people in a short period of time using technology and an AI platform.

Mr. Rhagaven shared the case study of their participation in XPrize/Fow Grand Challenge and explained their philosophy to provide flexibility with self-paced education. He discussed how they developed their curriculum by working with partners for wrap-around support

Chairperson Lesaux thanked Mr. Rhagaven and asked whether there were any clarifying questions. There was a discussion regarding the outcome of the Pragya Systems pilot project and the ongoing tracking of progress.

Chairperson Lesaux introduced Kelly Aiken, former Chief Program Officer, National Fund for Workforce Solutions and provided an overview of her work in workforce and social policy development.

Kelly Aiken discussed the need for integrated public private partnerships as a foundation for workforce development. Ms. Aiken shared that taking a trauma informed lens is critical with equity as the core of the solution. She highlighted a four-part solution to support innovation and scale:

* Equipping workers for success through co-investment on a federal, state, and regional level
* Providing resources and infrastructure for employers to improve job quality to ensure a sustainable workforce
* Changing systems to support workers and employers
* Public-private partnerships are vital to bring creative solutions

Ms. Aiken shared lessons learned on a federal level and stressed that building infrastructure at the employer level is vital to support the required industry partnership and sector strategies.

There was discussion of the term infrastructure and defining it as the staffing and technology that are required for capacity building and advancement of the system.

**Board Discussion**

Chairperson Lesaux then opened the meeting for Board Discussion.

There was discussion regarding specific partnerships. Ms. Aiken highlighted Skills Boston and provided a typical composition of a workforce collaborative and discussed the leadership role in partnerships.

There was discussion of how the role of technology and AI powered tools, and Alex Johnson shared how it has impacted the workforce system as a support and training tool.

There was discussion regarding financial responsibility and Ramji Rhagaven shared his philosophy that stakeholders and training providers, rather than learners should be responsible. Kelly Aiken provided insight into how corporate philanthropy funds innovation. Assistant Secretary LaPage added that standardization and consistency of the process, coupled with an urgency to scale requires a more sizable and intentional investment. He shared that sustainable strategic investments are needed to drive scale and used the state’s investment in skilled trades as an example. He stated that state and federal resources are needed initially to draw volume quickly and when employers see a return on investment, it is necessary to have a shared investment to ensure a sustainable pool of funds. Chairperson Lesaux agreed that funding models can evolve to ensure funding sustainability. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy stated that initial investments in a certain segment of the sector are needed and as investments are made in the operational sustainability of employers, they are able to become part of the infrastructure and lessons will be learned about scalability.

There was discussion regarding available data regarding individuals with past experience and interest in the field. Alex Johnson stated that there is robust data regarding past experience that he would be happy to share. Assistant Secretary LaPage echoed that past experience data is easy to capture and stated that MassHire has started the work of recruiting these individuals back into the workforce. He stated that it is important to identify the characteristics of likely candidates for recruitment. Mr. Rhagaven stated that it is important to provide this data to the learners so they can identify and match their skills to available career pathways. Professor Intrator shared that his work with Project Coach has shown a need for career awareness and social networking for young people to identify their skills and competencies at critical junctures.

There was discussion regarding investments in advocacy for higher education partnerships with high schools in order to provide pathways and opportunities for a continuum of education. Secretary Peyser shared data from post-graduate surveys from vocational schools that shows that 300 out of 355 recent graduates stay in the field through employment or post-secondary education. Secretary Peyser posited that those numbers would be greatly reduced when viewed in two to three years and there needs to be greater effort to cultivate students coming out of Chapter 74 vocational programs with early education concentration. Assistant Secretary LaPage shared that approximately 50 schools provide intensive early education and care specific training, and data shows that a majority of the graduates work for a year or two and then continue with secondary education. Assistant Secretary LaPage stated that there is a gap in the data that shows whether the students continue with the education pathway and noted that the Commonwealth is deploying strategies to look at industry and sector based pathways to build strategies for graduating students to be prepared for the workforce.

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy thanked the Board and panel for the robust conversation which helps drive EECs goal of providing multiple pathways for career progression that reflects the diversity of the workforce and the supports they need.

Chairperson Lesaux provided closing remarks and thanks for all the insights during this critical time for early education and care.

Meeting ended 4:00pm