

Board of Early Education and Care

**October 9, 2024
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Department of Early Education and Care, Metro Boston Office
500 Victory Road Suite 2100
Quincy, MA 02171**

<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

Jamella Lee

George Atanasov

Dr. Kimberly D. Lucas

Jennifer James Price

Cheryl Travers

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

Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga

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

MINUTES:

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chair Belsito welcomed the Board and thanked the Quincy EEC team for hosting the meeting. He provided welcoming remarks and an overview of the agenda.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Tutwiler provided an update regarding the inter-agency task force. Secretary Tutwiler provided an update regarding the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) contracted provider procurement and commended Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Tyreese Nicolas for their work and discussed a recent event held at a child care program to witness how the work aligns with EEC's core values.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Kershaw discussed the contracted provider procurement and expressed gratitude to her colleagues at EEC and DCF for their work to support programs, children and families through the procurement process. Commissioner Kershaw welcomed the Board to the recently opened Quincy office and discussed EEC's efforts to professionalize the field at every level. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the Career Pathways and ECE Scholarship Programs. Commissioner Kershaw provided an update regarding the EEOST Capital Grant program and the application process. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the status of funding for a new Child Care Financial Assistance information technology system and provided an update regarding an upcoming Request for Quote for an educator portal to update and modernize the educator user experience. Commissioner Kershaw provided personnel updates and discussed the

agenda for upcoming Board meetings.

Statements from the Public*

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

Chair Belsito welcomed Michelle Haimowitz, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Head Start Association, who provided public comment regarding flexibility allowed to states by the recent Child Care Development Fund Final Rule. Ms. Haimowitz provided an overview of the services provided by her organization. Ms. Haimowitz outlined the two updates to the Child Care Development Fund Final Rule and their anticipated affect on Head Start and families that receive Head Start services.

Routine Business:

- Approval of Minutes from the September 11, 2024 Meeting – VOTE
 - Chair Belsito offered amendment to show that Board Member Travers was in attendance at the September 2024 Meeting
 - Approved with Board Member Carolyn Kain abstaining

Items for Discussion and Action:

- FY25 Support for Career Pathways Program & ECE Scholarships

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Jocelyn Bowne-EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Support, Erica Morin-EEC General Counsel and Sarah Sian-EEC Workforce Development Specialist to discuss a proposal for the use of new funds in the FY25 budget to support educators to access higher education. Commissioner Kershaw outlined the proposal to utilize new scholarship funding and leverage the existing Career Pathways structure with minor changes to increase accessibility for new educators. Commissioner Kershaw clarified that this proposal addresses students affected by the reduction in FY25 funding for Career Pathways and who would not be eligible for Mass Educate, the free community college initiative. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an overview of the Career Pathways and the Early Childhood Educator Scholarship programs and outlined the proposal for the use of new scholarship funding. Co-Chair Moeller spoke in support of removing institutional barriers for all individuals to access college while remaining flexible to the different path options and advocated in support of community colleges to offer courses in different languages to encourage participation. Board Member Price echoed Co-Chair Moeller's comments and discussed the need for integration of the application and matriculation processes to meet goals. Commissioner Kershaw recognized that additional work is needed to remove barriers and support the workforce on their path to professional development and stated that today's proposal will address gaps for FY25. Chair Belsito thanked the Department of Higher Education for their collaboration and commitment to learning.

Erica Morin-EEC General Counsel provided an overview of the Motion for Approval.

- VOTE
 - Approved unanimously

- Agency Research Agenda and Key Performance Indicators

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Amy Checkoway-EEC Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, & Data, Adrienne Murphy-EEC Director of Data and Ashley White-EEC Director of Research. Commissioner Kershaw and Senior Associate Commissioner Checkoway discussed the development of an agency research agenda and key performance indicators in order to support data driven decision making. Director White discussed the research agenda goals and provided an overview of how the agenda was developed. Director White outlined the research priorities related to family access, program stability, program quality and workforce support. Director White discussed recent efforts to build capacity at EEC and highlighted existing research partnerships. Director White outlined next steps for the research agenda. Co-Chair Moeller expressed excitement regarding collecting data related to Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI). Chair Belsito thanked the EEC research team, Commissioner Kershaw and Secretary Tutwiler for their efforts to prioritize research. Board Member Lucas expressed appreciation and excitement regarding the research agenda and acknowledged the hard work to develop the agenda and encouraged colleges and universities in Massachusetts to participate. Director Murphy discussed the efforts taken to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in the past year. She recognized the EEC team members who participated in the work to develop the KPIs and build the data dashboards that will publicly share the data. She explained the KPIs as related to each EEC Strategic Objective and the key criteria used to develop each KPI. Director Murphy provided a snapshot overview of the data dashboards related to program stability, workforce support, family access and highlighted their functionality. Director Murphy outlined the metrics that will be shared on the dashboards for program stability, family access and workforce supports. Director Murphy outlined next steps to utilize the KPI metrics. Board Members Ruiz and Travers expressed excitement about the dashboards. Board Member Atanasov, Director Murphy and Commissioner Kershaw discussed how the dashboards are created and the potential to use AI to think innovatively in terms of design and utilization of the data. Associate Commissioner Checkoway welcomed feedback from the Board on how to improve the dashboards. Board Member Lucas reflected on internal EEC staff excitement regarding the dashboards. Board Member Lucas, Director Murphy and Commissioner Kershaw discussed the cadence and process for updates of the data. Chair Belsito reflected on the potential impacts of the data driven learning agenda at EEC. Co-Chair Moeller, Board Member Price, Director Murphy and Commissioner Kershaw discussed potential updates to the dashboards going forward. Chair Belsito acknowledged the members of the field who provide the data that is being utilized. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the impact of the data being shared across different units at EEC.

- Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) Updates

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Tyreese Nicolas-EEC Deputy Commissioner of Family Access and Engagement to provide an update on the Contracted Provider Services re-procurement.

- Current Caseloads and Trends

Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of how families can access Child Care Financial Assistance. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the current caseload data for Child Care Financial Assistance by population, by program type, by age group, and by type of financial assistance.

Commissioner Kershaw discussed various factors affecting caseload. Commissioner Kershaw detailed the current Child Care Assistance waitlist data and explained current limits on families receiving access through the waitlist. She explained the process for families to access Child Care Financial Assistance and how current funding levels affect eligibility levels. Board Member Sagor clarified that the waitlist represents the number of children, not the number of families. Chair Belsito, Co-Chair Moeller, Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed how eligibility is confirmed and how anticipated improvements in systems and technology will improve the process for families.

- Contracted Provider Procurement

Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided an overview of the Contracted Provider re-procurement process and highlighted the goals of the re-procurement. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas shared the timeline for the re-procurement process and shared the current status. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the response to the re-procurement and provided a breakdown of the responsive programs by population served. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed data related to the number of seats requested and awarded for income eligible, DCF-related, families experiencing homelessness and young parents by region and age group. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas contrasted the funding levels and number of children served the last time the contracts were procured in 2009 and the current funding levels and number of children served. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas and Commissioner Kershaw highlighted that the 2024 contracts do not include children served through contract flex pool funding. Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed continuity of care to ensure minimal disruption to families. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided a summary of the procurement services and discussed next steps in the process.

Board Member Lee, Commissioner Kershaw and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed funding and supports for families experiencing homelessness. Board Member Sagor and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the ongoing partnership with DCF and recent increases in personnel at both DCF and EEC to support families. Commissioner Kershaw thanked Deputy Commissioner Nicolas and her team, and the EEC Fiscal team for their hard work throughout the re-procurement process. Co-Chair Moeller and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed lessons learned through the process to increase provider participation for the next procurement.

Chair Belsito provided closing comments.

Meeting Adjourned 3:45PM