

March 8, 2022

Dear colleagues and stakeholders:

The days since announcing my transition have been filled with such warmth. I have communicated with many of the extraordinary individuals who have contributed so much to my experience as Commissioner. Serving in this role— especially during such a tumultuous time— has been the honor of my career. I have been immeasurably proud of the accomplishments and triumphs we have realized together over the last two and a half years.

Serving at EEC during a global pandemic has provided rare opportunities for accelerated support to an invaluable part of the state's infrastructure:

- Seizing chances to test new strategies, using federal investments and state partnerships, so that innovation could bolster a fragile field through the volatility and unexpected surprises of the last few years
- Deepening investments in services directly impacting families and supporting the urgent needs of young children
- Drawing from the ingenuity of leaders and practitioners across the state to design models for long-term impact that will continue to shape the Commonwealth for years to come

There are so many accomplishments the people of Massachusetts have helped to advance over the last two and a half years. I am so proud of all we have done, but a few milestones stand out the most:

- **For families**, we have reduced out-of-pocket costs for those receiving subsidy by an estimated \$50M+ annually by creating an innovative parent co-pay structure
- We made significant adjustments to the child care subsidy system to sustain thousands of parents through the pandemic - including enrollment based payments, extended job search eligibility, and lifting enrollment caps on subsidy contracts to create more flexibility for programs to enroll more families
- And we made investments in over 50 communities to support meeting family needs in new and innovative ways, including programs like Remote Learning Grants, Summer Step-Up Programs, Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, and expanded Parent Child+ investments
- **For child care programs**, we have distributed C3 Operational Grants to nearly 6,500 programs, totaling over \$260M since July 2021; the innovative formula developed by EEC has offered a new approach to supporting child care operations with a proven stabilizing effect, preventing program closure; grants are now being proposed for continuation in both the Governor's FY22 supplemental budget request and the discussion around Legislature's Economic Review Commission.
- We developed new systems to support critical child care operations - including creation of a delivery system to distribute \$57M worth of PPE directly to programs and a first-of-its-kind Testing for Child Care Program - for continuous operations during COVID recovery
- Through all this, we have continued to support so many innovative approaches to coaching and training, including the launch of Early Child Support Organization (ECSOs), redesign of the Professional Development Centers (PDC's), and creation of Business Administration cohorts— all part of a growing toolbox for program leaders to build program quality

- **For Educators**, we implemented many strategies to begin professionalizing this varied workforce and building a pipeline that supports individuals throughout their career, including increasing access to Early Childhood Education scholarships, launching EEC Professional Pathways resources for those entering the field, and design of a Professional Registry
- We streamlined the Background Record Check system, and reduced barriers within the Teacher Qualifications system to provide more flexibility for those entering the field
- We also made many direct financial investments in educator compensation through EEC efforts to raise compensation, including the C3 Operational Grants that are directly supporting increases to educator salaries, benefits, and bonuses
- **For the Department**, we have seen unprecedented growth in the agency's staffing and budget. To support this growth, we have implemented a restructured organizational chart aligned to strategic plan implementation— representing a critical increase in staffing for the Department. With over 25+ new positions created in the last two years, EEC is well on the path to having the capacity necessary to accomplish its ambitious vision.
- We have developed more structured department communications and regular meeting practices, engaged in cross-unit collaboration to address backlogs and re-orient the work around constituent needs, and built leadership structures within a strong and high functioning executive team to ensure appropriate supervision and support across all units. These structures have been critical investments that help empower each and every staff member to achieve excellence in their role every day.
- And we have adopted deep data driven practices that will inform the work for years to come, including improving our subsidy and budget management, better leveraging technology dashboards across all units, and building data analytics capacity to measure our impact in real-time. I am endlessly impressed with the amount this small-but-mighty team has achieved in such a short amount of time!
- **For the Board**, you adopted a strategic action plan for 2020-2025 that represented the needs of the people of Massachusetts, who informed every initiative, strategy, and goal. I am grateful for the Board's call to devise a plan at the onset of my tenure, and for the support and insights throughout the last two years that have guided the implementation of core strategies.

The role of a Commissioner sits at the intersection of countless divergent perspectives. I worked every day to strive to provide each one a voice in EEC's work. As I make this transition, I wanted to take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude:

**To the children and families of the Commonwealth:** from the depths of my being, I believe children represent the greatest potential for our society; there is so much to build from in those early, impactful years. It has been a tremendous honor to represent you within state government, and to contribute to a vision for the Commonwealth in which parents are supported as their children's first and most important teachers, and in which children are able to fulfill their potential both now and in the future.

**To the educators and leaders of early education and care programs:** I have never stopped learning from you. Through the pandemic, the recognition of your services to children and families, and the understanding of your role as a critical backbone, has been paramount. The path of rebuilding might be exhausting, but it is well underway – powered by

your tireless efforts and dedicated service. Just looking at all we've accomplished in the midst of so much chaos, I know that Massachusetts has the unprecedented opportunity to show the country what progress can *really* look like for this sector.

**To the EEC Family:** I will never forget our first days together, when you patiently taught me the ins and outs of the Department's 25+ units performing a myriad of functions, helped me remember 250+ names and grounded me in the operations of this complex, multifaceted agency. You banded together to transform this Department during a time when the whole world was changing around us. You inspired me throughout every day of pandemic operations - and that inspiration will carry me through the rest of my career. You give the words 'public service' their truest and deepest meaning - I am grateful to have been witness to your passion, leadership, and commitment.

Advocates, partners, programs, educators, children and families: your voices matter. Collaboration matters. Coming together to call for progress across our system is the greatest contribution you can make to a higher-potential future for children and families across the Commonwealth. Thank you for sharing your perspective, representing your constituencies, and maintaining the high expectations that all Massachusetts residents deserve from their public servants.

As I navigate my own path forward, I will be stronger, wiser, and more thoughtful because of every conversation and relationship I had the honor of participating in throughout my tenure in this role.

I look forward to supporting the vital work ahead in new ways. The successes we have shared have been hard won across some of the greatest challenges our state and country have ever seen. I know we are all exhausted, but I also know that you have the strength and resilience to keep going - together. I am – and will remain– your unrelenting and greatest supporter.

Truly yours,  
"Commissioner Sam"  
Samantha Aigner-Treworgy