**Board of Early Education and Care**

**September 13, 2023**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Department of Early Education and Care, Central Office**

**50 Milk Street, 5th Floor**

**Boston, MA 02110**

[https://www.youtube.com/c/EECMass](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https*3A*2F*2Furldefense.com*2Fv3*2F__https*3A*2Fwww.youtube.com*2Fc*2FEECMass__*3B!!CUhgQOZqV7M!mtJGkDA0V8yVgg2uKSG9uy90hzVOfMC6kxew8RLmPytYEKM5G63U2wNQX5lmit0oRma9LJJQvSy2Xg9khjIXdBkRMbjsJqM*24&data=05*7C01*7Cmike*40renvisioning.com*7Cfc2fcdfea44a4844760708da926316e2*7C804f5616b15149f0831435a91562ab97*7C0*7C0*7C637983251547746626*7CUnknown*7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0*3D*7C3000*7C*7C*7C&sdata=GfmZaBZpVTD29gjgCI6wqLvtPwwz9k3Ct84ytJS62uk*3D&reserved=0__;JSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUl!!CUhgQOZqV7M!nAONvpYnuUFeIIGmPyWAYzixbXXP4opicM2oKiaL2PxTSq3vmDXa1fDb49UwAzr-myowXZhp4oTO75KqUO9_ZCMBwQ$)

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

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Commissioner

Paul Belsito, Chairperson

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, Vice-Chairperson

George Atanasov

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

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

Jamella Lee

Mora Segal

Stephanie Curenton, Ph.D.

Nikki Ruiz de Luzuriaga

Cheryl Travers (via phone)

**AGENDA:**

**Welcome and Comments from the Chair**

Chairperson Belsito called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the agenda.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler welcomed the Board and attendees. He highlighted Early Education and Care investments included in the FY24 state budget recently signed into law by Governor Healey, noting that the level of funding is the highest dollar investment in education in Commonwealth history and will allow expansion of access and affordability while stabilizing the sector.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Kershaw thanked the Secretary and the Board. She provided updates regarding holiday closures, the procurement process for childcare financial assistance, and the background record check system. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged the state of emergency declared by the Governor related to the migrant homeless population and discussed work being coordinated across state agencies to respond to the needs of families.

Chairperson Belsito thanked the Commissioner and expressed commitment to providing support for children and families across the Commonwealth. He provided feedback on Commissioner Kershaw’s comments regarding the state of emergency.

**Statements from the Public**

Lucas Skorczeski, Co-Executive Director of Acres Family Childcare, provided a letter and comments regarding the exclusion of family childcare programs from C3 funds. He discussed the supports that family childcare programs provide to families that are similar to center-based programs, as well as operational challenges faced by family childcare systems across the Commonwealth. Mr. Skorczeski urged the Board to support family childcare as part of the early childhood workforce to ensure that the mixed delivery system is as strong as possible.

Chairperson Belsito thanked Mr. Skorczeski and acknowledged that the Board received additional public comment by email from various providers on the same topic.

**Routine Business:**

* Approval of Minutes from June 13, 2023 Meeting – VOTE
  + Chairperson Belsito acknowledged receipt of an email from Board member Curenton stating that she was unable to register her vote Board by-laws. Board member Curenton indicated her support of the by-laws.
  + Approved with George Atanasov abstaining.
* Approval of Minutes from August 21, 2023 Strategic Board Retreat – VOTE
  + Approved with George Atanasov abstaining.

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

* Board Retreat – Summary, Reflections, and Takeaways

Chairperson Belsito thanked The Guild of St. Agnes for hosting the Board retreat and congratulated them on the opening of their new facility and partnership with Worcester State University. Chairperson Belsito thanked the Board members for their time and commitment. Board members Sagor, Moeller, and Segal provided comments and reflections on the retreat. Board member Atanasov expressed his regret for not attending due to a longstanding family commitment and commented that he appreciated learning from the provided materials. Chairperson Belsito thanked the Board members for the continuous improvement mindset that was evident during the retreat. Commissioner Kershaw provided a review of what was covered at the retreat and the foundation that was laid for the upcoming year. She highlighted the FY23 accomplishments and discussed FY24 priority initiatives. Commissioner Kershaw detailed FY24 budget highlights and outlined the major topics and action items for FY24 that will require Board input.

* Child Care Financial Assistance Reform: Regulation and Policy Timeline Update

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Deputy Commissioner for Family Access and Engagement Tyreese Nicolas to provide an overview of the reforms to Child Care Financial Assistance and to discuss strategies for implementation. Commissioner Kershaw reminded the Board that the regulation changes that were approved were slated to go into effect on October 1 and will require a longer-term culture change, training, and change management process. She provided an update to the childcare financial assistance caseload, stating that the goal of returning to pre-Covid levels was met in June. She further shared caseload data by funding stream.

Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided an update regarding the EEC early educator staff pilot program, stating that this project is moving from a pilot to a priority population. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided an overview of the childcare financial assistance reforms and provided updates to current initiatives. Chairperson Belsito asked for clarification on how families communicate with EEC and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas stated the most common ways are through the childcare resource and referral agencies and emails to the designated subsidy mailbox. Vice-chairperson Moeller commented that the initiatives and changes in mindset have already resulted in increased enrollment and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas commented that policy changes have been made prior to the implementation of the regulation changes. There was discussion about the phased implementation approach with a focus on collaboration, support, and resources. Chairperson Belsito commented that it would be helpful to have a presentation on the waitlist cleanup project during this fiscal year and Deputy Commissioner Nicolas agreed and discussed policy updates related to the waitlist. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas provided an overview of the timeline for financial assistance reform. Deputy Commissioner Nicolas discussed the priorities and approach to aligning policy to regulatory reforms and detailed the changes made to policies and procedures. Commissioner Kershaw commented that the regulation changes are executed through changes in policy and procedure and highlighted that there was effort to shift the focus of the polices to the family experience. Commissioner Kershaw thanked Deputy Commissioner Nicolas for her leadership and stressed that the changes are ongoing and will require feedback and continued collaboration.

* Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Spring Survey Findings

Commissioner Kershaw welcomed Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Support Jocelyn Bowne, Director of Analytics, Adrienne Murphy, and Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy, Research, and Data Analytics, Amy Checkoway. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided background information on the C3 grant and explained the process for data collection. Ms. Murphy provided an overview of data collected from the Spring 2023 C3 survey, which was completed by 6,800 programs or 87% of all FCC and GSA programs. Ms. Murphy provided data related to the enrollment stabilization. She discussed data related to how programs reported spending C3 funding, and the impact that a loss of funding would have on programs, educators, and families. Ms. Murphy shared responses from programs on how funds would be spent if the funding became permanent. Board member Segal inquired about the level of reliability of the data related to how funds are spent, and Deputy Commissioner Bowne clarified that the survey questions are reflective of how the programs focus the investment on their larger budget and outcomes will be looked at. Ms. Murphy shared that the surveys are cumulative and previous answers are prepopulated to show percentage changes over time. Board member Curenton and Vice-Chairperson Moeller provided comments on the impact of C3 funding on the field and the importance of maintaining C3 funding in conjunction with increased rates. Commissioner Kershaw commented that the data learned through the C3 survey informs future decisions on how to create a healthy financial structure for the early education and care system. Ms. Checkoway discussed data from the C3 Spring Survey related to capacity, staffing, and compensation. She highlighted that programs are continuing to increase salaries, but salaries need to continue to grow to be competitive, which is reflected in the turnover rates. Deputy Commissioner Bowne stated that compensation is a key tool to address staffing shortages, which is a major challenge to programs. There was discussion regarding data insights into a threshold compensation and if C3 funding is sufficient to increase salaries to that threshold, as well as provider concerns regarding the stability of C3 funding. Board member Lee inquired about the profile of programs who do not respond to the C3 survey and Ms. Checkoway shared that there was not a clear characteristic but providers that serve children who receive financial assistance are more heavily represented in the survey. Ms. Checkoway shared data related to waitlists and program affordability. Commissioner Kershaw stated that investments are focused in key areas without programs passing costs onto families. Board member Segal requested that trend lines be included when the Fall data is be shared in early 2024. Deputy Commissioner Bowne provided an update for FY24 and FY25 planning and discussed levers for adjustments. Board members shared their key takeaways from the data and provided insight into considerations to be included going forward as the C3 program transitions from emergency stabilization to ongoing operational support. Board member Ruiz de Luzuriaga and Vice-Chairperson Moeller discussed affordability of quality care for parents and prioritization of funding and Board member Segal requested that questions regarding quality be included in the survey. Vice Chairperson Moeller and Board member Segal discussed measuring grant performance to ensure equity and impact on children. Board member Lee commented that it is necessary to explore key differences in how family child care and center-based programs utilize C3 funding in a more nuanced way going forward and there was discussion regarding the importance of flexibility for programs to spend the funds.

* The Economics of Child Care – Rappaport Institute of Greater Boston Research Initiative
  + Jeffrey Liebman, Director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government & Robert W. Scrivner, Professor of Social Policy, Harvard Kennedy School of Government

Commissioner Kershaw introduced Jeffrey Liebman, who provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Rappaport Institute and the research study being conducted related to the economics of childcare.

Professor Liebman stated that a report is expected to be produced in 2024. Professor Liebman highlighted three areas that his work has identified as challenges in constructing a comprehensive system for families to access high quality childcare and how he plans to address the challenges in the study. Board member Segal commented that it would be beneficial for the research study to look at the impact of public Pre-K in relation to the subsidy system and also include an economic perspective on a strategy for multiple agencies to work together to increase performance in literacy throughout a child’s education journey.

Board member Ruiz de Luzuriaga supported including research related to providing direct payments to parents in the study. Board members Segal and Curenton, Vice-Chairperson Moeller, and Professor Liebman discussed the benefit of studying how investments impact equity for different models and income levels. Board member Atanasov and Mr. Liebman discussed methods for studying impacts on business stakeholders and the workforce. Commissioner Kershaw stated that the context of Professor Liebman’s research is understanding the cost of care relative to how EEC is funding programs and understanding the role of the different funding streams as EEC moves towards approval for the alternative methodology. Board member Curenton inquired if the research study would address and identify areas in the Commonwealth with a lack of child care programs due to poverty levels and Professor Liebman confirmed he plans to incorporate existing mapping to inform research and plans to study how differences in costs are affected by different needs. Commissioner Kershaw stated that EEC currently has a project gathering data related to formal childcare deserts and will share that data with Professor Liebman to inform the research. Chairperson Belsito provided closing remarks.

Meeting concluded 3:40PM