

Name/Organization	Topic/Comments
Carol Tousey-Crosby, Commonweal Family Childcare, Inc.	<p>To Whom It May Concern: I attended the Board meeting via the YouTube channel and was struck by the presentation from the gentleman from Acre Child Care. Our FCC System transports children in 3 different geographic areas. Families who access this service are receiving both voucher and DCF subsidy slots. As the gentleman acknowledged, these are some of the most challenging families we have. In addition, our ability to hire and pay qualified drivers is now next to impossible. The cost of transporting children, including increased insurance rates, vehicle maintenance, increased gas prices, increased recruitment costs, and employee salaries (including time spent by office staff who must support drivers when parents are not home, or when there are other transportation issues going on) has become prohibitive. I ask that EEC consider these problems when addressing changes to subsidy policies and procedures and FCC System rates. Thank you for your consideration.</p>



Acre Family Child Care
327 Gorham Street
Lowell, MA 01852

978.937.5899 www.acrefamily.org

Attn: EEC Commissioner Amy Kershaw

Subject: Request to include FCC Systems in C3 funding

September 12th, 2023

Dear Commissioner Kershaw-

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We know that EEC is strongly committed to uplifting FCC educators and we appreciate that you and your team are engaging with FCC Systems to better understand the critical supports that we provide to them. That commitment is evidenced in the state's current model of funding contracts for FCC Systems to facilitate statewide access to the waitlist for families seeking compatible, high quality childcare while ensuring that FCC educators affiliated with Systems are assured of a consistent source of enrollment and corresponding financial stability, a full network of administrative services, personalized mentoring and professional development coaching and other wrap around services such as transportation and participation in a Food Program.

The recent ARPA Workforce and Technology grants awarded by the Department were hugely applauded and have highlighted just how much more FCC Systems can do with dedicated funding to retain existing staff and invest in one-time IT supports. Throughout COVID, nothing slowed down for Family Child Care Systems. As an agency we experienced a consistent demand for services and increase in children, families, and Providers. We are now working with 26% more children than prior to COVID, all while working with a similar sized staff. Our staff has been amazing at responding to this need; they have managed increased bus routes, family contracts, and providing additional necessary supports to educators that are entering the field for the first time. In line with the goals of C3 funding we seek to recruit and retain highly skilled early childhood professionals, but need your support in investing in our overextended staff.

As we anticipate the new fiscal year with a continued need to recruit and retain talented candidates to support our affiliated educators along with a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the veto of a rate reserve for early education and care in the state budget, we are seeking a dialogue with the department on C3 funding for FCC Systems. We believe that an oversight occurred in the initial development of the C3 funding formula that resulted in the omission of recognition of the critical role that FCC Systems staff play as pillars of support for FCC educators.

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We are bringing this matter to your attention with a sincere desire to work in partnership for an equity-based solution. Especially in light of the Legislature's Early Education Commission Report (Focal Area #4 & Recommendation #12) which urged additional resources to Systems "as they are an important part of the current infrastructure that will need to be further developed and supported for even higher field impact." (Commission Report, page 30)

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Sincerely,

Zelma Lyons-Khadar
Co-Executive Director

Lucas Skorczeski
Co-Executive Director



Tamara Brisson-Holder
Executive Director
tamara@kidstart.com

KID-START, INC.
444 No. Canal St, Lawrence, MA 01840, 978.686.7673

Aida Robles
Associate Director
aida@kidstart.com

Attn: DEEC Commissioner Amy Kershaw

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Heidi Medeiros - Early Head Start Family Child Care Coordinator with Citizens for Citizens, Inc.



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Jessica Russell, Asst. Director

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Margaret McDonald,
CEO, Clarendon Early Education Services, Inc.



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Dear Commissioner Kershaw.

On behalf of Family Child care Systems, we wish to thank you for meeting with us in June to discuss the upcoming procurement process and for opening up the conversation to include reflection upon the unique knowledge and experience that FCC Systems contribute to the FCC sector of the early education field in Massachusetts. We are very excited for the opportunity to work in partnership with EEC in thinking about what is working well for FCC educators and the children and families they serve and what changes can be made to improve upon the existing infrastructure of supports that are currently in place.

We know that EEC is strongly committed to uplifting FCC educators, and we appreciate that you and your team are engaging with FCC Systems to better understand the critical supports that we provide to them. That commitment is evidenced in the state's current model of funding contracts for FCC Systems to facilitate statewide access to the waitlist for families seeking compatible, high quality childcare while ensuring that FCC educators affiliated with Systems are assured of a consistent source of enrollment and corresponding financial stability, a full network of administrative services, personalized mentoring and professional development coaching and other wrap around services such as transportation and participation in a Food Program.

The recent ARPA Workforce and Technology grants awarded by the Department were hugely applauded and have highlighted just how much more FCC Systems can do with dedicated funding to retain existing staff and to create new positions assigned to technology supports for educators.

As we anticipate the new fiscal year with a continued need to recruit and retain talented candidates to support our affiliated educators along with a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the veto of a rate reserve for early education and care in the state budget, we are seeking a dialogue with the department on C3 funding for FCC Systems. We believe that an oversight occurred in the initial development of the C3 funding formula that resulted in the omission of recognition of the critical role that FCC Systems staff play as pillars of support for FCC educators.

When C3 funding was first introduced, it offered a much-needed relief in providing threshold income to early childhood programs. This funding helped to support center-based programs, family child care educators, programs that work solely for privately paying clients and those serving subsidy supported families. In many ways it has been successful and may be the single largest investment in early childhood education in the history of the state. However, this funding has failed to acknowledge the value of FCC Systems staff. Since the inception of C3 funding, FCC Systems across the state have not been included in the formula and what was once a temporary assistance program at the start of a global pandemic has grown into an almost billion-dollar investment that has excluded an entire sector of the ECE workforce.

C3 funds cover key financial overheads for increasing staff wages and benefits, absorbing increased transportation costs, implementing financial hiring incentives, and budgeting for building occupancy expenses. These are all costs that FCC Systems experience in line with direct care providers. While annual rate increases have helped with rising costs, and ARPA funding provided a much-needed lifeline for making one-time investments in staffing and technology, the FCC educators whom we work for do need us to maintain those salary and staffing levels for the long term. While direct care programs have been able to supplement salaries and provide financial incentives to hire new talent, FCC Systems have not received the same relief and have been disproportionately disadvantaged in our ability to retain and recruit much needed educator support staff at a time when the licensing of new FCC educators is at an all-time high. We hear from Licensors that FCC educators, especially newly licensed educators, are more likely to thrive and succeed with the supports offered by Systems and we strive to be open to every educator who comes to us, but we do need to increase staffing ratios and budgets in order to maintain quality to meet the needs of our growing networks.

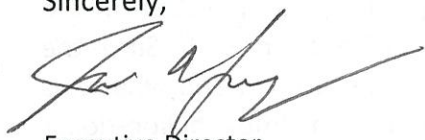
We understand that a reformulation for inclusion of Systems in distribution of C3 funding requires a thoughtful process and there would be a need to figure out funding criteria and levels. One possible solution might be to propose funding based on the percentage that Systems receive on the EEC rate. This could address differences in size and number of educators affiliated with Systems and the corresponding number of children that they are licensed to care for.

We are bringing this matter to your attention with a sincere desire to work in partnership for an equity-based solution. Especially in light of the Legislature's Early Education Commission Report (Focal Area #4 & Recommendation #12) which urged additional resources to Systems "as they are an important part of the current infrastructure that will need to be further developed and supported for even higher field impact." (Commission Report, page 30)

Throughout the COVID pandemic, countless community leaders, politicians, and news outlets have echoed this message: Family Child Care is critical in providing flexible, local, high-quality care solutions. Family Child Care Systems frequently work with some of the most vulnerable families in the Commonwealth, and we remain resolute in providing FCC educators with a strong foundation of supports to implement the best programming they can for the best possible outcomes for children.

With the right investments into our workforce, we believe that we can mutually expect to fully realize goals for continued innovations to enhance educators and families experiences in providing and accessing EEC funded childcare services. C3 funding should not take the place of annual rate reserves that adjust for inflation and cost of living, but it is an important supplemental funding mechanism for the entire field. We appreciate your belief in our work, and we are eager to engage in a conversation with you and the department about the immediate necessity of ensuring inclusion of FCC Systems in C3 funding with the ultimate goal of providing optimum services and supports to children, families, and educators across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Executive Director