**Board of Early Education and Care – Strategic Planning Retreat**

**September 7, 2022**

**10:30AM – 3:00PM**

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

**50 Milk Street, 5th Floor**

**Boston, MA 02109**

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

Nonie Lesaux, Chairperson

Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education

Amy Kershaw, Acting Commissioner

Mora Segal

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

Nikki Ruiz

Paul Belsito

Jamella Lee

Maria Gonzalez Moeller

**Others present**

Greg Norfleet, Chief Operating Officer, EEC

Janis DiLoreto Smith, General Counsel, EEC

Eugenia Soiles, Director of External Engagement, EEC

Sandra Fortier-Hollow, Associate Commissioner for Accounting and Finance, EEC

Meaghan Blanton, Deputy Commissioner for Internal Operations

Christian Kelly, Assistant Director of Special Projects, EEC

Martha Waldron, Director of Communications, EEC

Jackie Foley, Executive Assistant, EEC

Addison Koelle, Legislative Director, EEC

Christine McGrath, Paralegal Specialist, EEC

Andrew Rome, Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations, EEC

Blair Brown, Chief of Staff, EOE

Amy Checkoway, Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy Research and Data Analytics

Jocelyn Bowne, Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Supports

Joy Cohen, Director of Policy Development, EEC

Chris Power, Chief of Staff, EEC

Adrienne Murphy, Director of Data Analytics, EEC

Sarah Volkenant, Director of Program Innovation and Supports

**MINUTES**

**Welcome, Introductions & Meeting Overview**

Chairperson Lesaux welcomed the Board to the in-person strategic planning retreat. Chairperson Lesaux opened to the floor for introductions from the members of the Board and EEC staff.

**Agency Overview & Update**

Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the agenda and shared the retreat objectives. Commissioner Kershaw reiterated the strategic action plan goals and discussed the key data measures from the strategic action plan and shared that they are being revised in the coming months. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the steps taken to operationalize the strategic action plan and highlighted that EEC is taking a human centered approach. Commissioner Kershaw provided an overview of the new EEC organizational structure and discussed next steps for strategic areas of growth.

Chris Powers, Chief of Staff for EEC, provided an overview of the organizational structure for the Commissioner’s office and highlighted that the goal is accessibility and approachability for families, programs and stakeholders. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted that a key goal is consistent communication.

Greg Norfleet, Chief Operating Officer for EEC, discussed key goals for the agency, including focusing on future of work and implementing a training team and curriculum and creating a Project Management Office dedicated to rapid response project management.

Andrew Rome, Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations for EEC, provided an overview of Field Operations and stated that the goal is to partner with external partners as a regulatory agency. He discussed goals for updating regulations and the internal process for drafting the regulations and related policies. Deputy Commissioner Rome highlighted that his team is looking at ABA regulations with an eye toward providing recommendations for implementation in FY2024.

Janis DiLoreto Smith, General Counsel for EEC, provided an update pertaining to the Legal Unit and discussed the structure of the team. General Counsel Smith highlighted that the legal team’s focus is to maintain compliance while working with thought partners to find solutions to problems. General Counsel Smith highlighted the ongoing work to create an infrastructure for an appeals process and discussed the key priority for the BRC unit to create a user-friendly experience for EEC staff and external partners.

Commissioner Kershaw discussed the structure of the new Family Access and Engagement unit.

Amy Checkoway, Senior Associate Commissioner for Policy Research and Data Analytics, discussed the structure of the newly formed Research and Policy Unit.

Jocelyn Bowne, Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Supports, discussed the structure of Workforce Program Support and Innovation unit.

Board member Ruiz inquired about how diversity is being prioritized and Commissioner Kershaw affirmed that diversity is a priority and acknowledged the importance of reflecting the communities served and front-line staff. Board members Segal and Lee encouraged Commissioner Kershaw to set goals relating to diversity in the candidate pools. Board member Segal inquired about interim measurements for success as related to increasing capacity with an increased budget.

Commissioner Kershaw and Mr. Norfleet discussed how the goal of building capacity is to ensure that resources are dedicated to ensuring efficiency. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted the C3 grant program and its impact on EEC’s responsibility for innovation and support for the field and families. Commissioner Kershaw discussed EEC’s role in shifting the narrative to an asset-based view for the field, and revamping the quality investment strategy. Board member Belsito commented that there needs to be consistent communication regarding the role of EEC to reconcile expectations.

**Building a Workforce System: Workforce Pipeline & Educator Recruitment**

Deputy Commissioner Jocelyn Bowne discussed current and future state efforts to address system needs. She highlighted immediate steps needed to address workforce hiring challenges. Deputy Commissioner Bowne highlighted what is currently known about existing capacity, reviewed current EEC’s efforts, and discussed next steps to define and address key changes.

Senior Associate Commissioner Amy Checkoway acknowledged the importance of a qualified and competent workforce.

Director of Data Analytics Adrienne Murphy discussed data pertaining to licensed capacity and highlighted that levels are back at 93% which is 5,000 less than pre-pandemic. Ms. Murphy shared national bureau statistic data that shows that the workforce is recovering at a slower rate and is down approximately 13%. Systemwide capacity is growing but workforce has not recovered at the same pace.

Board member Belsito inquired about data divided across regions. Ms. Murphy shared that that information will be shared at the September board meeting. Ms. Murphy shared further insight into the workforce landscape with data gathered from the C3 grant application and survey data which highlights recruitment and hiring challenges. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the difficulties that Massachusetts licensing regulations have on capacity and there was discussion regarding the types of roles and ratio requirements. There was discussion regarding how data is tracked and how educators are moving within roles in the sector.

Ms. Murphy shared data pertaining to workforce openings and shared that providers that serve low-income and BIPOC communities face the biggest challenges. Ms. Murphy discussed information gathered from center-based providers pertaining to reasons why educators are leaving the workforce. There was discussion surrounding the 18% of providers who report educator retention and what can be learned from them. Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed anecdotal evidence gathered regarding high levels of educator stress and the impact on the workforce. Ms. Murphy stated that data pertaining to recruitment strategies which shows that compensation matters, but is not the only support needed. Ms. Checkoway stated that there is a C3 survey that will take place this fall and there is an opportunity to gather further information regarding compensation structure. There was discussion regarding EEC’s role in economic development and economic mobility for the field. There was discussion regarding setting benchmarks in a mixed delivery system. Secretary Peyser discussed different salary ranges relative to districts. Chairperson Lesaux stated that there is a need to build out the data regarding retention. Ms. Murphy shared data regarding the increase in FCC licenses and there was discussion regarding competition for the workforce pool and mixed delivery systems building.

Deputy Commissioner Bowne discussed current recruitment and retention efforts and there was discussion regarding how to prioritize by reach, degree of effort and ability to execute.

Board member Belsito inquired about minimum hiring requirements and Deputy Commissioner Bowne highlighted that there is a pathway for each entry point. There was a discussion regarding how to define the entry point as opposed to minimum hiring requirements. There was discussion regarding EEC’s role in retention systems building. There was discussion regarding apprentice programs and Board member Moeller shared how her organization approaches mentoring and apprenticeship. There was discussion on how EEC can support the apprenticeship model while keeping efficacy and scalability. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted pipeline and recruitment efforts from other states which is largely driven by a lack of available childcare for parents returning to the workforce.

Commissioner Kershaw asked the Board for guidance on next steps. Board member Belsito recommended providing more targeted data by region to identify opportunities for pilot programs. Commissioner Kershaw proposed a working group to explore opportunities and Board members Belsito and Segal stressed the need for urgent action. Chairperson Lesaux stated that there will be an update at the October board meeting and action steps will be shared at the November board meeting.

**Break**

**Reimagining the Child Care Financial Assistance System**

Commissioner Kershaw provided an update on the holistic feedback driven analysis of the subsidy system in order to create human centric process. Joy Cohen provided an update from the June board meeting and stated that the review is complete and interviewing is ongoing. Ms. Cohen highlighted a slight increase in families receiving subsidies from last year and stated that 75.1% of EEC budget is dedicated to child care subsidies. Ms. Cohen shared caseload trends and highlighted that the goal is to work towards optimal performance for case load counts. There was discussion regarding funding sources from the state and federal government. Commissioner Kershaw stated that currently there is enough funding to return to pre-pandemic levels and the goal is to streamline the process for families and providers. There was discussion about how subsidies are administered and funded. Ms. Cohen highlighted the state and federal statutes and regulations that must be considered while considering reforming the system. Ms. Cohen discussed how EEC is using available tools to affect change. Commissioner Kershaw highlighted that there is an opportunity to shift from a compliance focused agency. Ms. Cohen encouraged the board to review Appendix slide 43, which includes a newly procured translation service which takes the burden off the families to have important information translated. Ms. Cohen shared there is a new single page web-based application form that condenses 8-10 documents into one. Ms. Cohen discussed recommendations to the legal unit for regulation revisions. Ms. Cohen emphasized that efforts will focus on how to make the process easiest for families while considering and effectively addressing inequities based on structural racism. Commissioner Kershaw discussed procurement for CCR&Rs and contracted providers. Ms. Cohen discussed the timeline for initiatives and milestones through winter 2023.

Commissioner Kershaw stated that revisions to subsidy regulations will be presented to the board at the December meeting. There was discussion regarding the payment process for the subsidy system and the inherent lack of incentives that result. Commissioner Kershaw stated that more detailed information will be provided at the September board meeting related to the market rate survey. Commissioner Kershaw discussed the key metrics for reforms. Chairperson Lesaux stated that it is important to understand and integrate the role of EEC.

Chairperson Lesaux thanked the members of the Board and the retreat participants and adjourned the retreat.

Meeting ended 2:35PM