

July 6, 2020

Hello fellow advocates!

Thank you for attending our “Preparing Written Testimony” workshop. [Sign up for our email list here so you get updates!](#)

As we discussed, The [Joint Committee on Education](#) held the first part of a virtual Oversight Hearing on the Status of Early Education and Care in the Commonwealth during the COVID-19 emergency on [Wednesday, July 1](#) and will hold part two on [Tuesday, July 7](#). We expect the second hearing will also include a variety of perspectives from program administrators and parents.

**SFC encourages you to raise your voice and submit written testimony - your advocacy matters.** It is so important to share your personal experiences with legislators as they try to better understand the challenges the child care industry faces during this pandemic. Try to avoid going too deep into the weeds, and instead provide an overview of you and your program’s circumstances today. Provide data if possible, and present specific asks and solutions you think would positively impact the field. Your testimony will provide valuable insight as the state works to address the current situation.

We encourage you to **watch at least the first 10 minutes of [Part 1](#)** of the Oversight Hearing to get a sense of the structure of the event and hear examples of testimonies.

### **Structure for the testimony:**

- **Header:** Include your name and/or the organization you are representing in this testimony (if applicable). Include the name of the committee, topic of the hearing and date.
- **Salutation:** Greetings: address the testimony to the chair(s) of the committee in a formal way
- **1st Paragraph:** Introduce yourself and the organization you represent (if applicable). Explain your connection to the topic of the hearing. In your own words, state the purpose of your letter and your position on the issue. **Include key points about your program – location, number of children served ages, annual budget, if you have subsidies, private pay.**
- **2nd Paragraph:** State and explain the 2-3 points you developed in Step 2. **Include – how are you making it work in your program – using reserves? Credit? Negotiating with banks, landlords, etc**
- **3rd Paragraph:** Offer positive suggestions or alternative strategies to resolve the issue.
- **Final Paragraph:** Thank the committee for hearing your concerns and ask for their support of your position.

Send your testimony to both Chairs Peisch and Lewis ([Jason.Lewis@masenate.gov](mailto:Jason.Lewis@masenate.gov) and [Alice.Peisch@mahouse.gov](mailto:Alice.Peisch@mahouse.gov)) with the subject heading: “EEC Oversight Hearing Testimony.” **If you miss the July 7 deadline, don’t worry. There will be more opportunities to advocate in the weeks and months ahead.**

**On July 1st, the Committee Chairs Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Alice Peisch provided opening remarks and heard testimony from:**

- Education Secretary Jim Peyser

- Commissioner Samantha Aigner-Treworgy, Department of Early Education and Care
- Commissioner Linda Spears, Department of Children & Families
- Amy O’Leary, Early Education for All Campaign Director, Strategies for Children
- Bill Eddy, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Early Education & Care
- Maria Moeller, CEO of The Community Group in Lawrence
- Turahn Dorsey, Foundation Fellow, Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation
- Kim Dion, Program Director, Child Care Resources at Seven Hills Foundation

You can [watch the testimony from July 1 here](#) and [read Amy’s testimony here](#). For specific help with your testimony, email [info@strategiesforchildren.org](mailto:info@strategiesforchildren.org).

#### TO DO

- Get to know the [Joint Committee on Education](#).
- Develop 2-3 key points that you want to convey to the Committee.
- Watch at least the first 10 minutes of [Part 1](#) of the Hearing.
- Write your testimony. Tell your story.
- Have someone else read your testimony.
- Proofread it AGAIN.
- Send to the members of the Joint Committee on Education AND your [wheredoivotema.com]state legislators.
- Follow up – no one hit wonders!
- Send us your testimony!!

No one part of the system will be able to do this alone. We will need an unprecedented level of intentional and thoughtful collaboration, alignment and sharing of resources. We can no longer just monitor what each part of the system is doing, we will be dependent on each other and the decisions made will have implications for all parts.

**We know that we will get through this together. Thank you for all you do for children and families!**

Amy O’Leary

## Supplemental Materials:

### Questions from the Legislature during the Oversight Hearing on July 1:

- Senator Joan Lovely: Can you explain the distribution of the CARES act funding?
- Chairperson Lewis: Can you speak to the challenges facing the workforce? What about challenges around PPE? What will happen to educators who are unable to return to the workforce?
- Senator DiDomenico: Do you have any sense on parent demand? Do you have any idea about the preferences of parents? Age of children returning to child care? Geographic Distribution?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: How will EEC be tracking which families come back? How are you communicating with providers that accept subsidies and private pay families?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: How are you able to estimate the monthly loss on the private pay market?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: Do you have an idea on the usage of PPP loans for providers?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: How did you track the number of children, staff and families that contracted the virus in Emergency Care?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: What coordination is there between EEC, DESE, and DCF?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: To what degree can you guarantee that children are receiving the necessary support?
- Chairperson Lewis: What are you seeing around mental health needs for families? Are you taking any additional steps to provide these services for children and families?
- Chairperson Lewis: How are providers handling the health and safety requirements? In terms of the viability of providers going forward, are there providers you are most concerned about?
- Vice Chair Paul Tucker: Given the challenges, how will you continue to attract and maintain caregivers? Given the survey, are you seeing the same issues in urban, suburban, rural?
- Rep Ferguson: Can you speak to the financial impact of the closure?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: How did you cover the additional cost of providing care while running as an exempt emergency child care provider?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: Do you have a sense of the number or the degree to which other subsidized programs continue to do additional work in supporting families?
- Chairperson Alice Peisch: Can you speak to the impact of the transition from emergency care to expanded reopening care?
- Chairperson Lewis: What would you most like to see from the legislature?

### Examples of asks/recommendations for the MA Legislature Oversight Hearing:

#### Funding – General

- **Investing, with the public and private sectors, in strengthening and modernizing EEC.** especially in the areas of technical assistance for the field, professional development, the expansion of QRIS and the development of more sophisticated data systems that give us more dynamic insights into demand, provider supply and quality across the field and to allow for more direct feedback loops between providers and regulators.

- **Investing in the innovations and design processes that could be the pillars for a reimagined and more viable system** including shared services models that may help to lower the cost of doing business for providers, practitioner laboratory spaces that allow peers in the field to help one another adapt to unprecedented practice changes and hybrid program models that, for instance, better integrate early developmental and pediatric practices to achieve more holistic outcomes and, possibly, blend revenue streams to buoy provider organizations.
- **Use the budget and strategic partnerships to set a higher wage floor for early childhood workers.** Better calibrating subsidies to the cost of doing business and indexing for Massachusetts' cost of living would allow providers to pay their workers sustainable wages. If it can't be done exclusively through public dollars, consider the opportunity to create the kind of basic income vehicle that SEIU is advocating for locally for early educators in partnership with organizations like the Family Independence Initiative, which is already collaborating with DTA to reimagine family benefits and with whom we partnered to provide displaced workers with some of the supplemental income they've needed to get through the pandemic. Public and private donors could contribute to a direct cash assistance system that could essentially be base pay for early educators, and added to their traditional wages.
- **We would encourage the establishment of a foundation budget-like approach for early education.** As has been the case with Chapter 70, a foundation budget for early childhood would guarantee relatively robust and predictable annual funding. We have the benefit of lessons derived from recent K-12 foundation budget reviews and, therefore, the insights required to make the budget an engine for racial- and income-equity. We might go even further to include performance rewards and innovation incentives in such a vehicle to apply generative pressure to reach our universal aspirations in early childhood care and education.
- We need to change funding models. It is not sustainable to fund based on enrollment, per child / per day. Imagine if we tried to run a transportation system based on the per rider fare alone. It does not work. We need cost-based financing.

#### **Funding – COVID/Reopening Specific**

- **Standing in the capital gaps for early childhood**, providing emergency and bridge resources that will provide them a chance at successful re-opening and longer-term viability. This may be most true for small private pay providers who do not have the benefit of continuing subsidies.
- **We need government to protect the field and fully cover PPE costs.** It is projected that PPE costs may increase the cost of doing business for providers by as much as 20% at the same time they are seeing dramatic revenue declines. Providers should not have to bear the cost of protecting children, families and themselves from the current or future public health threats. While the state budget is undetermined for the next fiscal year, this has to be a priority. Moreover, the state can promote greater racial and economic justice by prioritizing networks like ProtectMA - a market of 40 People of Color- and women-owned PPE manufactures and distributors - in its procurement of supplies.
- We need to think differently about state funding – in labor, education, housing, health – to address the many parts of early education and care. Providers should be considered essential workforce going forward to provide them advantages others have like access to small business and nonprofit support that state might be catalyzing / offering.

## Technical Assistance

- **We need businesses contributing their expertise to and discounting their services for early childcare businesses to help them improve their margins.** Foreseeably, business could lend their expertise on a pro bono basis in the ways that Goodwin Proctor has done to provide early childhood business with guidance on the PPP program and others could participate in shared services networks to make sure that early childhood providers can affordably share costs for back office and other functions.
- We need to build out technical assistance for programs – financing, business planning, shared services, support for legal and human resources. COVID-19 has revealed that child care has little-to-no infrastructure to support these functions.

## Data

- **We need to know what companies know about their employees childcare needs, their program options and the impact of child care spending on households.** Frankly, we need companies to know more than they currently do, which requires more rigorous data collection, public reporting and collaborative analysis with government, philanthropy and academia to create information that better guides our systems design efforts and providers' business planning.
- We need to have local data systems designed to collect real time supply and demand for children birth – school age and can be used to determine what is available, what is needed, what is the gap, and how we can close those gaps.

## Access

- **We need employers driving more revenue to the providers that their families choose through progressive compensation and benefits packages.** As industries around the Globe, hopefully, rethink the social contract around worker security in light of COVID's vast displacement labor, we hope that employers will see access to childcare and early learning as central to worker guarantees, certainly for our most essential workers and also for those who will continue to work from home who will still need professional care support. Locally, Dana Farber is among those setting the pace, having created its own inventory of family child care providers that its employees can access using company provided family scholarships indexed to their salaries.

## Collaboration

- **We are calling for a joint meeting of the Boards of Early Education and Care and Elementary and Secondary Education to further discuss intentional collaboration and decision making.** We know that no one may have answers about the fall – but we need to be thinking through scenarios together. We will also need the same discussions and problem solving at the local level.
- **We need State government officials to advocate with us to Congress for significant funding and federal support in the short and term.**