Early Education and Care Data Advisory Commission: Fiscal Year 2025 Report to the Legislature

Report Overview

Pursuant to the requirements in Chapter 15D, Section 12 of Mass General Laws, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) submits the following report on the establishment of the Early Education and Care Data Advisory Commission. This report includes an overview of the Commission's charge and composition, a synthesis of the group's first meeting, and summarizes the Commission's planned next steps. Moving forward, the annual report will include key learnings and recommendations from the Commission.

Early Education and Care Data Advisory Commission

Overview

The Fiscal Year 2025 budget establishes in statute the Data Advisory Commission to "make recommendations to improve the use of state, provider and program-level data related to the cost, quality and utilization of early education and care services." Specifically, the Commission is charged with using data received by the Department "to make recommendations on high-impact, cost-effective data strategies for assessing the needs of families and children, including and not limited to:

i. Establishing a uniform data collection and reporting system to track the data that the department is required to collect;
ii. Strengthening the department's capacity to analyze and report on staffing, scheduling and financial data to support strategic resource allocation decisions;
iii. Strengthening the department's capacity to use data to inform strategic resource allocation and implementation decisions; and
iv. Streamlining data reporting, including, but not limited to, eliminating duplicative reporting requirements."

The Commission builds on the significant progress that the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC or the Department) has made to strengthen data and research infrastructure and capacity. Over the last two years, EEC has built the agency's first data and research division focused on collecting and analyzing data and leading research to inform policy decisions and improve programs and services. In October 2024, EEC launched key performance indicator (KPI) **Dashboards** on its website, as well as the agency's first **research agenda** and additional public-facing data sets and tools.

The work of the Commission also aligns with EEC's commitment to modernizing its user-facing data portals through two technology projects that are underway and will modernize and improve data collection and analysis. This includes the development of a new **family portal and case management system** for the

state's child care financial assistance programs (CCFA). EEC is working to build a more modern, mobile-friendly, accessible, multilingual, and dignified CCFA technology system, reducing barriers for families seeking assistance paying for child care and making it easier for child care providers to administer the programs. This system will enhance the availability of data on the CCFA waitlist and application and eligibility determination process. EEC is also designing and building an **early education and care educator portal** with an embedded credential management system. This system will improve the data available on educator demographics, employment, compensation, professional advancement, and recruitment and retention.

The Data Advisory Commission membership includes a diverse group of stakeholders as follows:

Membership*	**Organization**	**Member**
Department of Early Education and Care	Department of Early Education and Care	Amy Kershaw, Commissioner (Chair)
Executive Office of Education	Executive Office of Education	Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education *Designee: Mark Reilly, Undersecretary & Chief Operating Officer*
Massachusetts Association for Early Education & Care	Nurtury Early Education	Laura Perille, President and CEO
Neighborhood Villages	Neighborhood Villages	Lauren Kennedy, Co-President *Designee: Elizabeth Leiwant, Chief of Policy*
Massachusetts Head Start Association	Head Start & Early Learning Programs Community Action Pioneer Valley	Emmalie Dropkin, Director of Data, Planning, and Evaluation
Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership	Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership	Patrick Stanton, Executive Director
Common Start Coalition	MassBudget	Adam Jones, Senior Policy Analyst
Massachusetts Early Childhood Funder Collaborative	United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley	Ellen Dickenson, Senior Vice President for Research, Analytics and Planning
Massachusetts Business Roundtable	Massachusetts Business Roundtable	JD Chesloff, President and CEO

Membership*	Organization	Member
Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education	Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education	Tom Weber, Executive Director
Jumpstart for Young Children	Jumpstart for Young Children	Kate Warren Barnes, Head of MA Strategy & Partnerships
Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs	Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs	Kate Marie Roycroft, CEO
Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs	Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs	Jennifer Aldworth, Executive Director *Designee: Andrea Howard, Vice Chair, Board of Directors*
Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation	Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation	Doug Howgate, President *Designee: Victoria Bergeron, Policy Researcher*

*In addition, five individuals are currently in the appointment process and will join the Commission for its second meeting in the summer of 2025.

Summary of Data Advisory Commission Kickoff Meeting

EEC convened the Data Advisory Commission for a kickoff meeting on April 3, 2025. Meeting materials and a recording are available here. The kickoff meeting provided Commission members with an overview of the group's formal charge, an orientation to EEC's primary data systems, an overview of the new EEC reporting requirements included in the FY25 budget and the extent to which the Department already collects the data pursuant to these requirements, and updates on agency Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), research activities, and IT/data system enhancement work underway at the Department. The meeting concluded with a discussion of next steps for the Commission, including meeting frequency, cadence, and structure.

The meeting began with an introduction from Commissioner Kershaw. EEC staff next shared an overview of the key data systems that EEC currently relies on for information about the state of early education and care across the Commonwealth, including:

Data on Programs:

- Licensing Education Analytic Database (LEAD): Includes data on EEC licensed and funded programs, as well as information on licensing visits and investigations.
- Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3): Collects data from participating programs on program enrollment, staffing, educator compensation and staffing via monthly applications and additional key data of interest about programs, family access, early educators and C3 fund use via bi-annual surveys.

- Child Care Management System (CCMS) pilot: EEC is in the process of designing a pilot to work with a subset of programs to explore connecting EEC data systems directly to program CCMS to reduce reporting requirements and increase data quality.

Data on Educators:

- Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR): Includes data on early education and care educators who have registered with EEC over time. A new educator portal is being designed to replace the PQR to improve EEC's ability to collect, process, and understand key information about the early education workforce.
- Background Record Check (BRC): Includes data on background record checks conducted of educators and staff to ensure the safety of children in early education and care and residential settings.

Data on Children and Families:

- Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA): Contains child and family demographic/income data, as well as placement and billing data on all children receiving CCFA.
- KinderWait: Contains data on children and families on the CCFA waitlist. A new family portal is being designed to replace KinderWait.
- Family Access Caseload Tracking System (FACTS): Tracks the CCFA intake process from the point at which a family becomes eligible for financial assistance through placement with a program.
- Child Universal Success Platform (CUSP): Combines data from LEAD, CCFA, and other EEC data sources with publicly available enrollment data from public and private preschool and US Census data, to estimate supply and demand for early education and care across Massachusetts and track additional key metrics of interest across different data systems.

At the kickoff meeting, EEC also reviewed with Commission members the new data elements that EEC is required to collect and report on annually, to the extent feasible, as outlined in Chapter 15D, Section 2 of Mass General Laws, as well as the extent to which the Department is currently able to collect and report on each element given the data in the existing data systems described above. A comprehensive list of the elements, along with whether the Department currently collects and reports on each element is available in the meeting materials here. Finally, the Department shared information on efforts to modernize several existing data systems.

Discussion with Commission members at the kickoff meeting included exploring additional interagency data sharing to help fulfill the reporting requirements outlined in the statute and interest in focusing more at future meetings on the data that EEC has access to about child care supply and demand and existing data sharing agreements that EEC has in place.

Next Steps

During the kickoff meeting, it was agreed that at the outset the Commission will meet quarterly, including two additional meetings during calendar year 2025. Furthermore, EEC proposed to organize these

meetings around each of EEC's strategic priorities, starting with a focus on Family Access followed by Workforce Support, Program Stability, and Program Quality at the Commission's subsequent meeting. At each meeting, EEC plans to share additional information on key performance indicators and additional data metrics of interest, IT/data system development underway at EEC, and findings from key EEC research projects and partnerships, along with additional topics brought forth by Commission members. To foster robust discussion and ensure that members have the information needed to make informed recommendations to the Department, the two remaining meetings of this year will also focus on identifying and prioritizing opportunities to improve data quality, streamline and improve data collection, and further expand EEC's capacity to use data to inform decision-making and the accessibility of EEC data to the public.

EEC looks forward to continuing to keep the Legislature apprised of the work of the Data Advisory Commission. The Commission's next report will include initial recommendations in the key areas included in the Commission's charge.