

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ISSUES REPORT WITH POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAJOR EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE REFORMS**

(Boston, MA) - State Representative Alice H. Peisch and State Senator Jason M. Lewis, Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Education and the Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission, announced today that the Commission has finalized its report. Established by Section 106 of Chapter 227 of the Acts of 2020, the Commission was charged with studying early education and care funding and ways to support and expand equitable access to high-quality early education and care in the Commonwealth. The scope of the study included early education and care for very young children (ages 0-5) and out-of-school time care for school-aged children (ages 5-13).

The Commission's report concludes that the current early education and care system in Massachusetts is not meeting the needs of many young children, working families, and employers. Additionally, many early education and care providers are struggling due to workforce shortages and high turnover driven largely by inadequate compensation and benefits and lack of professional development and advancement for early educators and staff. The report further concludes that building a more sustainable, affordable, equitable, and high-quality system of early education and care is critical and urgent for the future of the Commonwealth's children, families, communities, and economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the pre-existing challenges facing the early education and care sector in Massachusetts, and especially the impact these challenges have on children and families from low-income, under-resourced communities. It has also underscored the importance of reliable and accessible early education and care options for working families in order to meet the workforce needs of our businesses and economy.

"Long a leader in K-12 public education, Massachusetts now has an opportunity to build on that success in the early education and child care sectors by acting on the recommendations contained in this report," said **Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch**, Co-Chair of the Commission.

"Implementing policies aimed at providing greater access to affordable, high-quality early education and care while ensuring effectiveness and sustainability was the primary goal of the Commission and remains a top priority for the Education Committee and Legislature. I offer my sincerest thanks to my co-chair Senator Jason Lewis, the members of the Commission, the many

individuals who provided feedback and testimony, and the staff who worked so diligently on this matter.”

“This report provides a blueprint for the Commonwealth to lead the nation in building an early education and care system that truly meets the needs of our young children, early educators, working families, and employers,” said **Senator Jason Lewis**, Co-Chair of the Commission. “This work is critical to our goals of advancing racial justice and an equitable economy that works for all. I’m deeply grateful to my co-chair Representative Peisch, the commission members, staff, and all the early education stakeholders who contributed so much time and effort to this important project.”

"Recognizing our EEC workforce was in crisis prior to the pandemic, the House has long championed childcare workforce needs, especially for those who are serving our most vulnerable children and families," said **Speaker of the House Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy)**. "Our childcare sector's proven dedication and commitment to working families in the Commonwealth, especially during the pandemic, cannot be understated. The pandemic further emphasized the key role childcare plays within the fabric of our society, and by bringing EEC providers, parents, state leaders and the business community together on these recommendations, we have laid the necessary foundation for ongoing partnerships to continue as we consider ways to stabilize and support the EEC sector and build a stronger system for providing access to high-quality, affordable care for families, especially our most vulnerable and underserved populations. I want to thank the commission members for all of their hard work and input developing these recommendations, but I especially want to thank Representative Alice Peisch for continuing to lead the House on this critical work on behalf of children and working families."

"Early education has a profound and positive impact on students' long-term development, but for too many families in Massachusetts it remains out of reach," said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. "This report sheds important light on how actions by the legislature could serve to make early education more accessible for all, while supporting providers. In addition to long-term economic development, investing in early education would bring immediate economic benefits, both for working families and for the early educators who have dedicated their lives to this important work. The pandemic has threatened decades of progress on women's participation rates in the workforce, and it has been particularly life-altering for working mothers; increasing access to early education will therefore support our state in achieving an equitable economic recovery. We are excited to use this remarkable report to help our legislative efforts in the Senate. I want to thank the commissioners who contributed to this thoughtful report, and especially Senator Lewis for his continued dedication to improving educational attainment in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

The Commission makes a number of comprehensive and urgent recommendations across four focal areas for addressing the many issues facing the state’s early education and care sector. These focal areas include (1) program stabilization; (2) family affordability and access; (3) workforce compensation, pipeline, and advancement; and (4) system infrastructure and local

partnerships. The recommendations are categorized as requiring either immediate, short-term, or longer-term action, along with implementation considerations and cost estimates.

“The health crisis has highlighted inequities in so many of our systems and also raised broad, concrete awareness of how critical the early education and care sector is to our economy and to the future of our Commonwealth,” said **Amy O’Leary**, Executive Director, Strategies for Children. “We continue to be inspired by this dedicated and resilient workforce and their commitment to providing high-quality learning experiences under incredible circumstances. The roadmap outlined in the Commission’s recommendations tackle many of the persistent challenges we have faced and puts us on a path to establishing a system of affordable, high-quality early education and child care for all Massachusetts families including much needed support for early educators. We look forward to our continued partnership to ensure full implementation and funding for this vision.”

The Commission included legislators, administration officials, early education and care providers, advocates, and business leaders. It held 10 public meetings, including one hearing devoted to public testimony; conducted two focus groups with providers; and reviewed multiple sources of evidence including a national review of research, consideration of models from other states and countries, and input from multiple stakeholders and experts.

“I was honored to serve on the EEC Economic Review Commission and encouraged that they sought insight from early educators in communities serving high percentages of low-income children. This level of attention and support for child care is exactly what our children, families, and educators need and deserve,” said **Maria Gonzalez Moeller**, CEO of The Community Group in Lawrence, MA. “The recommendations in this report can help ensure children with the highest needs are able to access life changing services of early education and care. They should also set the stage for the transformation of the child care system in our Commonwealth, and will help Massachusetts to lead the nation in building a system that truly works for everyone.”

“The pandemic has underscored what has long been established in research and data, but under-recognized at great expense to Massachusetts families and employers: early care and education is absolutely essential to a thriving and equitable workforce and economy.” said **Tom Weber**, Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education and Foundation Fellow, Eastern Bank Foundation. “The Commission’s well-considered recommendations, if implemented, would help make Massachusetts a global leader in attracting and supporting the success of workers with children, who are vital to the state’s economic recovery and growth. The Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education is committed to working with our public leaders, early childhood educators, and advocates to achieve a “world-class” system that supports the successful development of our children, workforce, and economy.”

The report cites decades of research that show a strong connection between access to high-quality early education and child development, achievement in school, and long-term success. High-quality programs that support verbal, social-emotional, and cognitive development are critical for the school readiness of young children and will help close long-standing opportunity gaps in K-12 education. The ability to access and afford high-quality early education and care

significantly impacts the economic wellbeing of working parents, especially women and people of color.

The Joint Committee on Education, in partnership with House and Senate leadership and other relevant committees, will work on legislation to implement the policy recommendations contained in the report. Fully implementing all these recommendations will require upwards of \$1.5 billion annually over time. Although the Commission did not address or identify new revenue sources, substantial additional resources will be necessary and will likely require a combination of increased federal funding—since the federal government currently provides more than 60% of the public funding to the early education and care sector in Massachusetts – as well as increased state funding and/or consideration of other alternative measures, such as requiring businesses of a certain size to provide an employee benefit for early education and care similar to current healthcare requirements.

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