

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida.**

June 25th, 2025

### **Time and Place of Meeting**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, a Florida Nonprofit, was held on June 25th, 2025, commencing at approximately 9:10am EDT at the offices of The Early Learning Coalition of SW FL, 2675 Winkler Ave Suite 300 Fort Myers FL 33901. Meeting held in person and Microsoft Teams.

### **Call to Order; Roll Call**

The following directors, constituting a quorum, were present in person or by teleconference:



- Kae Moore, Board Chair
- Laura R. Bright, Vice Chair
- Dr. Elizabeth McBride, Secretary and Human Resources Committee Chair
- Michele King, Program Committee Chair
- Dr. Kelly Ross
- Alex Breault
- Aaron Stitt
- Derek Burkholder
- Jamie Merchant
- Sean Kempton
- Barbara Short
- Bethany Quisenberry

**Directors absent:**

- Brooke Goldstein, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair
- Rebecca McKellar, Nominations & Bylaws Committee Chair

- Tara Sherrod, Events Committee Chair
- Char-Nequa Smith
- Tanya Williams
- Chantal Porte

**Coalition Staff Present:**

- Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz, Chief Executive Officer
- Richard Cocchieri, Chief Financial Officer
- Gilda Duran, Chief Program Officer
- Wynetta Upshaw, Chief Administrative Officer
- Monica Gaddy Administrative Coordinator.

**Presiding Officer; Secretary**

Mr. Kae Moore presided as Chair of the meeting; Monica Gaddy served as secretary of the meeting and kept the minutes. A quorum of the Board being present, Kae Moore called the meeting to order at approximately 9:10 am EDT.

## **Welcome & Public Input**

No one from the public attended 06/25/2025 Board of Directors meeting.

## **Adoption of the June 25, 2025, meeting agenda**

Kae Moore initiated a discussion regarding adoption of the June 25, 2025, meeting agenda. The agenda reviewed by the Board of Directors with an explanation of the Executive Session. During this time the ELC staff would be asked to leave room during Board discussions. The Board of Directors unanimously approved to accept meeting agenda without changes. All in favor with no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **Approval of May 14, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Kae Moore initiated a discussion regarding approval of the May 14, 2025, meeting minutes. Upon motion duly made by Michele King and seconded by Barbra Short, the Board of Directors unanimously approved by show of hands with no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **Direct Services Utilization through May 27, 2025**

Richard Cocchireri, CFO initiated a discussion regarding direct services utilization through May 27, 2025. A full discussion followed. Upon motion duly made by Laura Bright and seconded by Derke Burkholder, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the May 27, 2025, Direct Services Utilization report.

### **Approval of Financial Statements**

Richard Cocchireri, CFO initiated a discussion regarding approval of financial statements. A full discussion followed. Upon motion duly made by Laura Bright and seconded by Michele King, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the financial statements to include the Utilization Report through May 27, 2025.

The financial statements that were included in this voting record were the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Activities, the FY24-25 Budget Utilization, the Preliminary FY 2025-2026 Budget, and the 2025-2026 Procurement Request(s).

### **Anti-Fraud Plan & Due Process Requirements**

Kae Moore initiated the discussion regarding the updates anti-fraud plan & due process requirements. The new policy will include a CEO review. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for reviewing and initial Appeals re-

quests by recipient for a decision to uphold or modify the suspension or termination of services. A full discussion followed. Upon motion duly made Barbara Short and seconded Laura Bright, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the additions made to the anti-fraud plan & due process.

### **Approval of the Finance & Accounting Policies and Procedures for FY 2025-2026**

Richard Cocchieri, CFO initiated a discussion regarding the approval for the finance & accounting policies and procedures for FY 2025-2026. A full discussion followed. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Finance & Accounting Policies and Procedures for FY 2025-2026. All in favor with no one being opposed. The motion carried.

### **Approval of the Sliding Fee Scale & Fee Waiver Policies**

Kae Moore initiated a discussion regarding approval of the sliding fee scale & fee waiver policies. A full discussion followed. Upon motion duly made by Kelly Ross and seconded by Jamie Merchant, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Sliding Fee Scale & Fee Waiver Policies. All in favor with no one opposed.

### **Approval of Bylaws and Governance Updates**

Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz provided updates on behalf of Nominations & Bylaws committee chair Rebecca McKellar and initiated a discussion regarding approval of bylaws and governance updates. A full discussion followed. Upon motion duly made by Michele King and seconded by Barbra Short, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Bylaws and Governance updates.

### **Approval of the Annual Recommendation of the Slate of Officers for 2025-2026**

Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz initiated a discussion regarding approval of the annual recommendation of the slate of officers for 2025-2026. A full discussion followed. The Board of Directors reviewed the Nomination & Bylaws Committee's recommendations for the Slate of Officers for the 2025-2026 fiscal/program year. Upon motion duly made by Kelly Ross and seconded Jamie Merchant, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Slate of Officers:

- Kae Moore, Governor's Appointed Chair of the Board of Directors
- Laura Richardson Bright, Vice Chair
- Brooke Goldstein, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair
- Dr. Beth McBride, Secretary and Chair of the Human Resources Committee
- Rebecca McKellar, Chair of the Nominations and Bylaws Committee

- Michele King, Chair of the Program Committee
- Tara Sherrod, Chair of the Events Committee

### **Legislative Updates:**

Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz presented legislative updates regarding HB 1255 and SB 1102, they are awaiting the Governor's signature as of 5/23/2025. SB 738 is pending transmittal to the Governor and SB 112-Children with Developmental Disabilities was signed on 5/27/2025 L.O.F. 2025-95

### **Events Committee Updates**

Laura R. Bright provided update in Tara Sherrod's absence. The Staff appreciation luncheon will be Friday June 27, 2025. Board members can still make donations and are encouraged to come out to meet the staff and help serve lunch. This is an annual event whereby the Board and the staff can get to know one another. Continued work over the summer to enhance our partnerships Development and Special Initiatives.

### **Program Committee:**



Michele King presented overview of Program Committee Meeting. School Readiness (SR) enrollments at the end of April 2025 were 6,036, 6,519 for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) and 181 children on the waitlist. Class Assessment from 07/01/2024 through 5/23/2025 are favorable with 1 classroom scoring below a 3 and 123 6.5 or above. 424 Classroom observations for SR, 366 for VPK and 11 VPK summer classroom observed. A new teacher driven training will be implemented. The Early Childhood Specialists will be offering "Connect with CLASS" training in both English and Spanish. Topics will range from lesson plan preparation to how to improve CLASS scores. The Harry Chapin Food Bank is looking for locations to set up parent education classes to discuss nutrition and food. Providers can still take advantage of Lena Grow.

### **Human Resources Committee**

Dr. Beth McBride committee chair shared that the meeting scheduled for June 11, 2025, was cancelled due to quorum not being met. The next scheduled meeting will be September 10, 2025.

### **Executive Session**

The Board of Directors held an Executive Session wherein Coalition staff members were excused from this portion of the meeting.

## **Resolution and Affirmation of the CEO:**

The Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition Of SW Florida would like to affirm our confidence in the leadership of Dr. Melanie M. Stefanowicz. The board is pleased with the progress made on many fronts but would highlight changes made in financial reporting and financial clean up, handling of numerous audits, policy changes, and upgrades in technology.

We acknowledge and thank Dr. Stefanowicz for the steady progress toward meeting the mission of the Coalition. While we are pleased with the positive direction of the Coalition, we see continued challenges in the future and have complete confidence in Melanie's leadership going forward.

The Affirmation of the CEO was unanimously passed by the Board of Directors.

## **Next Meeting; Adjournment**

There being no further business, Laura Bright made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which Michele King seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 am. EDT. The next meeting was scheduled for September 24, 2025, at 9:00 am. EDT in person at 2675 Winkler Ave Suite 300, Fort Myers, FL 33901.

Respectfully submitted,