EARLY LEARNING
COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Monday, August 18, 2025, at 3:00 pm
6302 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Suite 100
Tampa, FL 33619

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Facilitator: Aakash Patel, Chair

Board Members Present:
Rebecca Bacon, Dr. Daira Barakat, Dr. Larissa Baia, Tracye Brown, Commissioner Gwendolyn Myers, Beth Pasek, Dr. Shawn Robinson, Annette Eberhart, Kelley Flannery, Jonathan Ferro, Wynton Geary, Adam Giery, Keidrian Kunkel, Brian Mays, Aakash Patel, Felicia Thomas and Cameron Cassidy

Board Members Absent:
Gino Casanova, Bob Hyde, Amanda Jae, Dr. Jacquelyn Jenkins, Ashley Porch, Chantal Porte, Noelle Wostal, Alina Shaffer and Dr. Emily Hudkins-Shaffer

ELCHC Staff:
Dr. Fred Hicks, Nancy Will, Gary Meyer, Sabrina Ruiz, Abigail Perez, Casie Haines, Alison Fraga, Kelley Minney, Nichole Gonzalez, Miya Mayes, Amarita Rosado and Kiyana Scott

Other Attendees:
Attorney Paul Quin, Noemi Thompson and Alex Ochoa

CALL TO ORDER

Quorum Verification
Noting an established quorum, Chair Patel called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance
Chair Patel asked Felicia Thomas to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Patel asked that new Board of Directors member, Keidra Kunkel introduce herself to the Board. Ms. Kunkel shared that she is the new President and Chief Executive Officer of Tampa Bay CareerSource. Ms. Kunkel also shared with the board that she serves on the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County and is looking forward to serving on the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County as well.

Chair Patel asked ELCHC Board members to introduce themselves to Ms. Kunkel, sharing how long they have served on the ELCHC Board of Directors and what they do for a career that led them to their position on the board.

There was board discussion on ELCHC polo shirts as well as name tags to be worn at the Children's Summit on September 18.

PUBLIC COMMENT I

No, public comment I.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mission Moment

Kelley Flannery shared she began learning about early education originally through the Florida Chamber and has been involved for about ten years. Ms. Flannery shared that she was always shocked that more people and groups were not having conversations about the importance of early education. Ms. Flannery also shared she has done work with MacDill Airforce Base and has heard about the struggle of military families with childcare. Ms. Flannery shared her five-year-old son finished Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten however, it took about two years for his placement at a learning center to open with his name being on a waitlist from the time he was several weeks old. Ms. Flannery stated she was excited to be working on the ELCHC Board of Directors.

Ms. Flannery also shared with the board that the South Tampa Chamber would be hosting an event with about 130 attendees on the topic of "What does it look like for the future of the workforce in Tampa Bay?" Ms. Flannery mentioned that Dr. Hicks would be speaking, and Chair Patel would be moderating the event.

Chair Patel asked for a motion to move to the Governance report.

Dr. Larissa Baia made a motion to skip ahead in the agenda to the Governance report. Commissioner Myers made a second motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Shawn Robinson gave the report as outlined in the agenda packet.

Dr. Robinson spoke to the application of Mr. Cameron Cassidy and spoke to the Governance committee recommending the approval of Mr. Cassidy to the ELCHC Board of Directors.

Dr. Robinson made the motion to approve the recommendation of the Governance Committee to welcome Mr. Cameron Cassidy to the ELCHC Board of Directors for a four-year term. Kelley Flannery made a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cassidy introduced himself to the ELCHC Board of Directors. Mr. Cassidy shared that he runs a wealth management-investment financial group in Tampa. Mr. Cassidy shared that he has a five-year-old child that just started kindergarten and understands the importance of early education. Ms. Cassidy shared that he was excited to be able to serve the community of Hillsborough in this capacity with helping to empower the next generation. Ms. Cassidy shared that he is from Tampa and wants to see it continue to grow and thrive.

Chair Patel welcomed Mr. Cassidy.

Chair Patel asked Mr. Cassidy if he would serve on the Finance Committee.

Chair Patel asked Ms. Kunkle to serve on the Legislative Committee.

Chair Patel spoke to the Children's Summit and introduced Dr. Hicks to give more details about elected officials who had confirmed their attendance.

Dr. Hicks gave an update on sponsorship tables that were still available. Dr. Hicks shared that traditional registration would be closed on Wednesday as the event cannot be oversold. Dr. Hicks shared that if anyone knew of anyone who would like to sponsor to please email him directly.

Commissioner Myers suggested that providers fill in at already paid tables.

Dr. Hicks shared that he would be sure to include providers to fill these tables.

Chair Patel spoke to the “Be the Ball” fundraising event at Top Golf. Dr. Hicks shared that Chair Patel sponsored a booth and thanked Chair Patel for his support as the ELCHC would be the benefactor of this event’s proceeds.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were included under the Consent Agenda:
Approval of August 18, 2025, Board of Directors Meeting
Approval of the June 23, 2025, Annual Board of Directors Draft Meeting Minutes
Approve allocation of funds for Microsoft licensing and support (annual renewal)

Commissioner Myers made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items A. through C. Dr. Shawn Robinson made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Patel went over the Chief Executive Officer evaluation. Chair Patel shared that 15 board members completed the evaluation and thanked the board for their participation.

Paul Quin, ELCHC Board attorney, shared that 17 out of 25 board members filled out the evaluation. Mr. Quin shared that scale of 3.0 with 2.82 as the average score. Mr. Quin stated that the evaluations would be forwarded to the state as the next step in the process.

Finance Report

Chair Patel introduced Gary Meyer, Chief Financial Officer, to give the finance report.

Mr. Meyer highlighted the following:

- 5th budget led by Mr. Meyer
- 99% of the budget is based on the Notice of Award with 1% based on assumption however, Mr. Meyer feels comfortable moving forward with presenting the budget
- Serve 12,330 children down approximately 700 children less than this time last year
- Budget workshop was canceled however, today’s presentation will serve as informational for the board of directors
- Waitlist ~4,500 children and planning on removing ~100 a week
- Local funding kicks in on October 1st
- VPK -funding very comparable to last year

Mr. Meyer shared how the ELCHC will balance the budget with a short fall of $3.4 million dollars

- Change in medical insurance for ELCHC staff to a lower cost carrier
- Teacher continuous education program initiative was sunset in July 2025
- Shifting quality programs around while still investing in quality programs

- Currently, on 5th year of a 6th year agreement with the school district to provide inclusion services, it was cut short by a year saving over $240,000.

Mr. Meyer spoke to pie charts included in the agenda packet to share the breakdown of the budget of the ELCHC. Mr. Meyer thanked the Children's Board of Hillsborough County for their continued support as well as the Baker-Mayfield Foundation. Mr. Meyer stated that the Children's Board of Hillsborough County funds of $1 million are for slots for families 70% and below the state median income. Mr. Meyer also thanked Metro Ministries (Children's Board) funds of $75,000 are for childcare slots for homeless children age 9 to 12 years old.

Mr. Meyer spoke to School Readiness highlighting the following:

- The bulk of funding goes to pay out child care providers at 81% of the budget
- Family & Provider Support is 7% of the budget at $6.9 million dollars
- Quality receives 8% of the budget at $7 million dollars
- Administrative budget cannot exceed 4% which equates to $3.3 million dollars and 4% of the budget

Mr. Meyer spoke to Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) highlighting the following:

- Administrative budget cannot exceed 5% of the budget which equates to $1.7 million dollars
- Direct Services (Provider Payments) which is 95% of the budget or $31.4 million dollars
- All Floridian families are qualified regardless of income

Mr. Meyer shared that the goal is to increase VPK enrollment moving forward for sustainability of the ELCHC.

Mr. Meyer ended his finance presentation sharing three pillars of strategy.

- Access is primarily our School Readiness (SR) program.
- Quality included our quality programs, provider professional development, CLASS (provider quality) assessments, provider quality differentials, and scholarships.
- Education is primarily Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK).

Chair Patel called for a motion to approve the budget as presented by Gary Meyer, Chief Financial Officer.

Keidra Kunkel made a motion to approve the budget as presented by Gary Meyer, Chief Financial Officer. Brian Mays made a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Myers recognized Rebecca Bacon and the Children's Board of Hillsborough County for their support of $800,000 for the Summer Boost Program.

Committee Reports

Chair Patel shared that the Service Delivery & Efficiency committee meeting did not meet since the last board meeting, however, they have a scheduled meeting on September 4.

Chair Patel called on Dr. Shawn Robinson to report on the Development & Outreach Committee.

Dr. Robinson gave an update on the progress of the Children's Summit including information about the guest speaker, Dan Wuori author of The Daycare Myth.

- 460 attendees
- Over $90,000 raised to date
- Opportunities for additional fundraising the day of the event including a ride around the track that can be purchased to use at a later date.
- All board members to be on stage at 1:00 for a group photo

Provider Review Committee Report

Paul Quin, Esq shared the duties of the committee and the process of the hearings. Mr. Quin reviewed the memo included in the agenda packet.

Legislative Committee

Chair Patel reviewed dates for Hillsborough Day 2026 in January and stated at the next meeting on the 27th at 3:00 more details would be discussed.

Chair Patel called on Board Member Annette Eberhart to share her experience with Hillsborough Day 2025.

CEO REPORT

Dr. Hicks reported that President Trump's line-item holds coalitions level and if that continues to hold true at the state level then it would be the best outcome for coalitions. Dr. Hicks shared that he is hopeful that other Executive Directors would not want to ask for an increase as this ask may put coalitions further under the spotlight.

Dr. Hicks referred to Mr. Meyer's report of opening the waitlist as one of the most important highlights. Dr. Hicks shared he feels it is best for all coalitions to be on the same page with their request for the next fiscal year. Dr. Hicks stated if the goal of the state legislator is to reduce the budget another $78 million dollars this next fiscal year it would be catastrophic.

Dr. Hicks shared it is important to meet with legislators at the local level which would be more impactful then waiting until Hillsborough Day 2026.

Dr. Hicks thanked the board of directors for their support.

Dr. Hicks shared the next listening session was scheduled for Wednesday. Dr. Hicks invited any interested board members to attend.

ANNOUCEMENTS

PUBLIC COMMENT II

There was no Public Comment II.

ADJOURNMENT

Citing the time, Brian Mays made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:08 pm. Dr. Shawn Robinson made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

Read and approved by: Robert Hyde 21/07/2026

Bob Hyde, ELCHC Board of Directors Secretary *Date*

Signature: Robert Hyde
Robert Hyde (Jul 21, 2026 13:31:57 EDT)

Email: robert.hyde@suncoastcreditunion.com

08.18.2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes_Approved

Final Audit Report 2026-07-21

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