
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5279 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

SUMMARY

This bill makes the following changes in the early childhood education statutes:

1. expands the Early Childhood Cabinet's membership and changes its attendance and compensation requirements (§ 1);
2. makes a technical change to the criminal history records check system that certain child care providers who accept state child care subsidies must use (§ 2);
3. extends the validity of the early childhood teacher credential issued by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to certain people with associate degrees (§ 3); and
4. reduces the number of weeks a child care program must operate to be a "year-round" program, lowering the threshold from 50 to 48 weeks per year and impacting certain OEC program operations (§ 4).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

*House Amendment "A" adds a provision allowing all parent members of the Early Childhood Cabinet to be compensated and removes provisions that change family child care home staffing and enrollment requirements.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022, except the provisions on criminal history records checks (§ 2) and early childhood teacher credentials (§ 3) take effect upon passage.

§ 1 — EARLY CHILDHOOD CABINET MEMBERSHIP

The Early Childhood Cabinet is an advisory body to OEC. The bill increases the cabinet's membership from 25 to 27, adding two appointments to the governor's eight in current law. These new appointees must be (1) an individual who is a licensed family child care home provider and member of a staffed family child care network (i.e., a regional community initiative offering ongoing support services) identified by the OEC commissioner and (2) a parent recommended by an OEC-appointed parent advisory group. The bill specifies that the following appointed parent or guardian members may be compensated, within available appropriations, for their time at and travel to cabinet meetings:

1. one who has a child who attends or attended a school readiness program and is appointed by the House minority leader,
2. one who has a child attending school in an educational reform district and is appointed by the House speaker, and
3. one who was recommended by a parent advisory group and is appointed by the governor.

Additionally, the bill eliminates from current law the mechanism that removes members from the cabinet if they miss three consecutive meetings or 50% of all meetings in one calendar year. By law, the cabinet must meet at least quarterly.

§ 3 — EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER CREDENTIAL

By law, OEC may issue an early childhood teaching credential to people who hold either an associate degree or a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education. The degree program must be (1) from a regionally accredited institution and (2) approved by OEC and either (a) the Board of Regents for Higher Education or (b) the Office of Higher Education.

Under current law, this credential's validity ends on June 30, 2021, when issued to someone who holds an associate degree. The bill removes the credential's termination date, making it valid indefinitely,

as when issued by the office to someone with a bachelor's degree.

§ 4 — YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM DEFINITION

The bill lowers, from 50 to 48, the number of weeks per year that a child care program must generally operate to be considered a “year-round” program. This new definition broadens the potential number of (1) school readiness programs that must use the excess portion of their per-pupil school readiness grant for salary staff increases and (2) child care programs to which the commissioner must give preference when (a) purchasing services and (b) awarding a supplemental quality enhancement grant.

School Readiness Staff Salary Increases

By law, school readiness programs are non-religious, state-funded programs that provide a developmentally appropriate learning experience for children three to five years old who are too young to enroll in kindergarten.

Existing law requires state-licensed school readiness programs that operate full-day, year-round programs and receive school readiness per-pupil state grants to use any grant amount exceeding \$8,927 per child exclusively to increase the salary of individuals directly responsible for teaching or caring for children in school readiness program classrooms (CGS § 10-16p(l)). By reducing the number of weeks that a school readiness program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the bill broadens the potential number of school readiness programs that must use their per-pupil grant excess for staff salary increases.

Purchase of Child Care Services

By law, if the OEC commissioner directly purchases child care services, she must give preference to providers of full-day and year-round programs. These programs may be provided by public schools, child care centers, group or family child care homes, family resource centers, or Head Start, among others (CGS § 17b-749a). By reducing the number of weeks that a child care program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the bill broadens the potential

number of child care programs to which the commissioner must give preference when purchasing services.

Supplemental Quality Enhancement Grant

By law, the OEC’s supplemental quality enhancement grant program provides, within available appropriations, competitive grants to child care centers or school readiness programs to help them enhance their programs through accreditation or the purchase of educational equipment, among other things. The commissioner must give priority to applicant programs that operate year-round, among other criteria (CGS § 17b-749c). By reducing the number of weeks that a program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the bill broadens the potential number of programs to which the commissioner must give preference when awarding this grant.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 39 Nay 0 (03/25/2022)