



PA 22-100—sHB 5279

Education Committee

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

SUMMARY: This act makes the following changes in the early childhood education statutes:

1. expands the Early Childhood Cabinet’s membership and changes its attendance requirements and compensation allowances (§ 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, from 50 to 48, the number of weeks that a child care program must operate to be a “year-round” program, potentially expanding the number of programs covered by certain OEC program requirements or operations (§ 4).

The act also makes technical and conforming changes.

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 AND
COMPENSATION**

The act increases the Early Childhood Cabinet’s membership from 25 to 27, adding two appointments to the governor’s eight under existing law. These new appointees must be (1) a licensed family child care home provider who is also a 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. (By law, the cabinet is an advisory body to OEC.)

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

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Existing law, unchanged by the act, prohibits all other cabinet members from receiving compensation for their services.

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

§ 2 — CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK SYSTEM

Prior law required relatives who provide child care services to a child and received Care 4 Kids child care subsidy payments from the state to submit to a check of the Connecticut Online Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing System. The act makes a technical change, requiring the check to be conducted through the Connecticut Criminal History Request System.

§ 3 — EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER CREDENTIAL

By law, OEC may issue an early childhood teaching credential to those 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 prior law, this credential's validity expired on June 30, 2021, when issued to someone who holds an associate degree. The act removes the credential's expiration date.

§ 4 — YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM DEFINITION

The act lowers, from 50 to 48, the number of weeks per year that a child care program generally must operate to be considered a "year-round" program. (Existing law, unchanged by the act, provides a waiver process for school readiness programs seeking an exemption from the minimum weeks requirement.) In doing so, the act potentially increases the 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 purchasing services and awarding supplemental quality enhancement grants.

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 ages three to five years 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 only to increase the salary of people 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

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readiness program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the act potentially increases 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 act potentially increases the 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 act potentially increases the number of programs to which the commissioner must give preference when awarding this grant.