

**Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood  
Before the Committee on Children**

**H.B. 6180 - An Act Concerning Notice of Firearms by Operators of Family Child Care Homes**

**H.B. 6839- An Act Increasing the Number of Children Permitted in Family Child Care Homes**

**H.B. 6840 - An Act Requiring the Office of Early Childhood to Study the Availability of Child Care Services Throughout the State and to Develop a Plan to Address Infant and Toddler Child Care Services Needs for Low-Income Families**  
**Thursday, February 6, 2025**

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Good afternoon, Senator Maher, Representative Paris, Senator Martin, Representative Dauphinais, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify on three bills:

- **H.B. 6180** - An Act Concerning Notice of Firearms by Operators of Family Child Care Homes
- **H.B. 6839** - An Act Increasing the Number of Children Permitted in Family Child Care Homes
- **H.B. 6840** - An Act Requiring the Office of Early Childhood to Study the Availability of Child Care Services Throughout the State and to Develop a Plan to Address Infant and Toddler Child Care Services Needs for Low-Income Families

The OEC supports the intent of **H.B. 6180 – An Act Concerning Notice of Firearms by Operators of Family Child Care Homes**, with two recommended revisions to the bill language. The proposed bill would require, no later than January 1, 2026, the operator of a licensed family child care home in which one or more firearms is stored to provide written notification of the presence of such firearm(s) to the parent or guardian of each child enrolled in the home. The notification must detail the number and type of firearm(s). The parent or guardian must acknowledge receipt of the notification with their signature, and the operator must keep such documentation on file for three years and available to the Office of Early Childhood upon request. On and after January 1, 2027, written notification shall be provided to the parent or guardian of any child enrolling for the first time. No later than February 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the operator must confirm compliance with these requirements during the preceding calendar year in a form prescribed by the Office of Early Childhood. Finally, the OEC may suspend or revoke the operator’s license for failure to comply with these requirements.

The OEC’s mission is to protect the health and safety of young children. Our statutes and licensing regulations ensures accountability and oversight of baseline standards in critical areas such as abuse and neglect, staff-child ratios, staff qualifications, health care, and physical plant safety. In some instances, our regulations and statutes require notification to parents, such as an injury of the child. This bill is in keeping with the agency’s work to keep parents informed and to protect the health and safety of children. Furthermore, *Caring for Our Children*, the publication sponsored by the Administration for Children and

Families under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, established a set of standards for quality care in early childhood programs and includes a provision for notification to parents of children attending family child care homes if firearms are present in the home.

We do, however, have recommendations concerning the disclosure of the number and type of firearms stored in the home, along with citing for failure to comply.

First, providers are currently required to store guns and other weapons in a locked storage area, openable by key, combination, or other similar locking mechanism to prevent access, and the ammunition stored and locked in a separate location away from the guns and inaccessible to children. This is applicable regardless of the number of guns stored in the home. The OEC supports written notification to parents that one or more firearms is stored in accordance with the family child care home regulations but does not believe the disclosure of the type or number of firearms is necessary.

Second, section 2 of the bill allows the Commissioner to suspend or revoke the license if the provider fails to comply with the provisions of section 1 of the bill. The OEC conducts at least one full inspection of every licensed family child care home each year, during which we monitor the statutes and regulations applicable to such licenses. If one or more violations of the regulations are cited, the provider must take immediate steps to correct the violation(s) and submit a written corrective action plan to the agency. If the response is accepted by the agency, the inspection is closed, and both the inspection report and corresponding corrective action plan is made available to the public via the 211Childcare website. In most cases, this is a suitable course of action. In consideration of the issue of notification to parents of a firearm being stored in the home, if a provider had not provided written notification to parents that one or more firearms are stored in the home, OEC would cite the violation and require a written corrective action plan. OEC already monitors whether a provider has guns in the home and if they are stored properly. If guns are not stored unloaded and/or locked, it is more likely that a violation of that regulation would rise to the level of the OEC making a determination that the health, safety, or welfare of the children receiving family child care services require emergency action, rather than failing to provide written notification of the presence of an otherwise properly stored firearm. For these reasons, OEC recommends the proposed language in section 2 be removed.

The OEC appreciates the intent of **H.B. 6839 - An Act Increasing the Number of Children Permitted in Family Child Care Homes**. This proposed bill would increase the number of children permitted in a licensed family child care home from 9 to 12 with the presence and assistance of an approved assistant or substitute staff member. Increasing the number of children permitted in a family child care would expand the supply of child care across the state.

Family child care home licenses are currently issued to individuals for a maximum of six infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, two of whom may be under the age of 18 months, and three school age

children. In some instances, OEC limits the capacity of a family child care home license if there are space constraints within the home. In general, a provider alone may care for 6 children during the day and 3 school age children before and/or after school, or up to 9 children full-time with an approved assistant or substitute present. Simply increasing the family child care home capacity to 12 without consideration for staff/child ratios would, at a minimum, permit family child care providers to have the same capacity as that of group child care home providers, also licensed for up to 12 children, without consideration for the health and safety requirements of group child care home regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, local building, zoning, health, and fire requirements. We cannot overlook the importance of local governance in caring for that many children in a private family home.

We do, however, appreciate the intent of the bill and the pursuit of increasing child care capacity, and look forward to working with the Committee chairs and proponents of this concept.

The OEC also appreciates the intent of **H.B. 6840 - An Act Requiring the Office of Early Childhood to Study the Availability of Child Care Services Throughout the State and to Develop a Plan to Address Infant and Toddler Child Care Services Needs for Low-Income Families**. This bill requires the OEC to conduct a study, no later than January 1, 2026, and annually, concerning the supply and unmet need of infant and toddler and preschool care by municipality and across the state. The bill also requires the agency to develop a plan, no later than January 1, 2026, to address the shortage of infant and toddler care statewide. The breadth and scope of the study may seem straightforward on its face but given the current status of the data available to the agency - the work necessary to complete the requirements requested would require extensive staff resources and manual entry. To complete the study and plan, the OEC would need additional resources to build upon our current data set and complete this ambitious work. The agency does not have the capacity at this time but we are working with providers to address our data gaps.

Thank you for your time and attention. The OEC is committed to working together—with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates, and parents—to better serve our families with young children.

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*The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood advances a two-generation family-centered approach in our pursuit of optimal health, safety, and learning outcomes for young children. Through our core programs, we support infant and toddler care, preschool, after-school care, child care and youth camp licensing, home visiting, and early intervention to address developmental delays. OEC is working toward better-coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.*