



## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD

The following is a compilation of public acts passed during the 2024 regular legislative session concerning early childhood matters and/or impacting the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) operations. This is only a summary. These summaries are based on both the actual bill language and the bill analysis prepared by the General Assembly's Office of Legislative Research (OLR). The complete text of each public act can be reviewed and may be accessed on the Connecticut General Assembly's web site at [cga.ct.gov](http://cga.ct.gov).

### **P.A. 24-81 (H.B. 5523) - AN ACT CONCERNING ALLOCATIONS OF FEDERAL AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS AND PROVISIONS RELATED TO GENERAL GOVERNMENT, HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION AND THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00081-R00HB-05523-PA.PDF>

The House and Senate passed a one-time ARPA funding package for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025, and the bill has been signed by the Governor. The following is included in the funding package for early childhood.

#### **Section 1: One-time ARPA funds for FY25 allocated to the OEC**

- \$18.8 M for Care 4 Kids – Additional funding will help address the Care 4 Kids wait list.
- \$1.2 M for Smart Start – This allows the 240 funded slots in 16 classrooms in 10 communities funded by ARPA funded “Smart for Recovery” to remain open and available to children.
- \$1.8 M for Tri-Share – This is a pilot model where business, parents, and the state share the cost of child care for the participating family. Governor Lamont proposed this in legislation, and it is a recommendation in the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care report.
- \$100 K for Capitol Child Development Center in Hartford.
- \$2 M for New London BOE at Early Child Care Center at B.P. Learned Mission.

*Effective from passage*

#### **Section 1: ARPA for Private Providers**

- \$50 M – 2.5% COLA for Private Providers (includes OEC state contracted providers: School Readiness, Child Day Care, Home Visiting, Birth to Three).

*Effective from passage*

#### **Section 66: Advisory Board for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing**

- Renames the advisory board from “the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind” to “the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing” and expands the board’s membership and its duties and reporting requirements. Requires the advisory board to hold an annual leadership roundtable meeting with various executive branch agencies to discuss best practices and gaps in services for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, and make recommendations to rectify these gaps.



- Adds the Office of Early Childhood to the list of executive branch agencies that will serve on the advisory board. The advisory board roundtable meeting will include the following participants or their designees: 1) the commissioners of aging and disability services, public health, social services, mental health and addiction services, education, developmental services, children and families, early childhood, economic and community development, emergency services and public protection, correction, housing, and labor; 2) the Office of Higher Education (OHE) executive director; and 3) the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR).

*Effective October 1, 2024*

**Section 233: Birth to Three Deficiency for FY24**

- \$607,000 to cover the Birth to Three deficiency.

*Effective from passage*

**Section 234: OEC Budget Reductions for FY24**

- (\$1,650,000) - Personal Services
- (\$9.7 M) – Early Care and Education in lapsed funds

*Effective from passage*

**P.A. 24-78 (S.B. 14) – AN ACT ASSISTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES, IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND CAREER SYSTEM AND ESTABLISHING EARLY START CT**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00078-R00SB-00014-PA.PDF>

Sections 24 through 41 of this act establishes Early Start CT, a unified state-funded early care and education program, effective July 1, 2025. Early Start CT merges the School Readiness and Child Day Care program and State Head Start Supplement under this new single state-funded system.

**Section 24: Definitions**

- Defines 1) “Accredited”, 2) “Commissioner”, and 3) “Office”.

**Section 25: OEC Statutory Charge to Operate Early Start CT**

The OEC will operate and administer Early Start CT to provide state funding to early care and education programs throughout the state and coordinate and facilitate the efficient delivery of such early care and education programs for eligible children. Under Early Start CT, the office will:

- 1) Provide open access for infants and toddlers and preschool-age children to high-quality early care and education programs that promote the health and safety of children and prepare them for school;
- 2) Provide opportunities for parents to choose among affordable and accredited early care and education programs;
- 3) Encourage coordination and cooperation among early care and education programs and prevent the duplication of services;
- 4) Identify the specific service needs and unique resources available to particular municipalities;
- 5) Prevent or minimize the potential for developmental delay in children prior to their reaching the age of five;



- 6) Strengthen the family through: (A) Encouragement of family engagement and partnership in a child's development and education, and (B) enhancement of a family's capacity to meet the special needs of the children, including children with disabilities;
- 7) Reduce educational costs by decreasing the need for special education services for school-age children;
- 8) Assure that children with disabilities are integrated into early care and education programs available to children who do not have disabilities;
- 9) Improve the availability and quality of Early Start CT programs and their coordination with the services of child care providers;
- 10) Facilitate the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the children, families and staff in early care and education programs;
- 11) Maximize local and federal early care and education funding to expand capacity and access.

*Effective July 1, 2025*

### **Section 26: Contracts**

(a) Allows the OEC to enter into a direct or third-party contact with the following eligible entities to receive state financial assistance: municipalities, local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers (RESCs), family resource centers, Head Start programs, preschool programs, nonprofit organizations, child care centers, group or family child care homes, and any other program that meets the OEC Commissioner's standards. The assistance is for operating early care and education programs that focus on providing services based on economic, social, or environmental conditions, including in regions with insufficient access to child care.

At least 60% of the eligible children enrolled in an early care and education program receiving financial assistance from Early Start CT must be members of a family that is at or below 75% of the state median income. A child care center or group or family child care home must be licensed by the OEC, and any local or regional board of education or RESC preschool program must be approved by the State Department of Education (SDE).

Requires the Commissioner to ensure that the majority of early care and education programs receiving financial assistance serve children that reside in, or attend early care and education programs in, priority school districts, former priority school districts, or towns with schools deemed severe need schools because 40% or more of the lunches served are served to students eligible for free or reduced priced lunches.

Allows the OEC Commissioner, when determining whether to enter into a contract for financial assistance, to consider a community's Care 4 Kids participation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) social vulnerability index as the census tract determines.

(b) Requires any contract to be made contingent upon available funding and a successful application submitted to OEC that has been informed by the appropriate local governance partner's needs assessment and community plan (see Sec. 27).

(c) OEC may allocate an amount up to 10% of the total financial assistance under the contract with each local or regional governance partner, but no more than \$150,000 for coordination, program evaluation, and administration. Requires the allocated amount to be increased by an amount equal to local funding



provided for early childhood education coordination, program evaluation, and administration, not to exceed \$50,000.

Each local or regional governance partner must designate a staff person to be responsible for coordination, program evaluation and administration and to act as a liaison between the community or community and the Commissioner.

(d) Prohibits any Early Start CT care and education program that receives financial assistance from discriminating based on ancestry; race; color; national origin; sex; gender identity or expression; sexual orientation; religion; learning, physical, intellectual, or mental disability; or any other protected class.

(e) Prohibits funds received from being used to supplant federal, state, or local funding received for early childhood education on behalf of children in an early childhood education program.

(f) Allows program to be paid by a per-child rate or an amount per classroom that has been determined by the Commissioner. The per-child cost must be at least: \$10,500 for each child ages three or four, or age five and not eligible to enroll in school; or \$13,500 for each child under age three who is in toddler or infant care and not in a preschool program. The amount per classroom for such children shall be at an equivalent rate per child multiplied by the total capacity of the classroom as determined by the Commissioner on a case-by-case basis and established in the contract.

The Commissioner must develop policies and procedures governing classroom sizes, payments, and required enrollment rates. The Commissioner must use data-driven, outcomes-based contract provisions to facilitate and incentivize full enrollment.

(g) OEC may use up to 3% of funds allocated to the early care and education appropriation to evaluate program effectiveness and impact on participating children, families, and programs, including, but not limited to, child outcomes, later school performance, quality standards, professional development and preparation, and parent engagement impact.

(h) Exempts from the RFP requirement any Early Start CT facility that has been approved to operate an early care or education program financed through the Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority and received a commitment for debt services from the Department of Social Services on or before June 30, 2014, or from OEC on or after July 1, 2014.

*Effective July 1, 2025*

#### **Section 27: Local Governance Partners, Local Needs Assessment, Staff Liaison**

(a) Requires local or regional governance partners be established, within available appropriations, to assist in providing early care and education in a community under Early Start CT. Allows a town or school district or region, and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early care and education in the town or school district or region to establish a local governance partner. Requires OEC to monitor each local or regional governance partner for compliance with the bill's provisions.

(b) Requires the membership of each local or regional governance partner to reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the town or region it serves. Membership must consist of early care and education stakeholders, including the following:

- elected and appointed officials;
- parents;
- representatives with expertise in early care and education;
- a representative, where applicable, of a Smart Start funded program;
- education and healthcare providers;
- local homeless education liaison;
- community representatives from a workforce or job training entity;
- other community representatives who provide services to children.

(c) The role and responsibilities of a local or regional governance partner include, but are not limited to:

- conduct and administer a data-driven needs assessment for its respective community or region;
- employ strategies to solicit parental engagement and membership;
- provide periodic technical assistance regarding best practices in early care and education and family engagement;
- jointly sponsor, with the OEC, professional development opportunities;
- ensure that community outreach is regularly conducted and maintained with community stakeholders.

(d) Each local or regional governance partner must, within available appropriations, conduct a data-driven needs assessment for the town or region in which such partner serves. The needs assessment may include recommendations for the preferred distribution and allocation of child care spaces within the respective town or region, and, subject to OEC approval, may include a data-driven methodology to reassign child care spaces before the contract date has lapsed. The needs assessment will be created by the OEC in collaboration with communities and will inform the assignment of child care spaces across a mixed-delivery system.

(e) Each local or regional governance partner must employ a staff liaison to aid and support the local or regional governance partner. Each staff liaison must ensure that:

- 1) partnerships are established and fostered among child care providers;
- 2) cooperation is maintained with the OEC in monitoring and evaluating early care and education programs;
- 3) existing and potential resources and services available to children and families are identified;
- 4) facilitation and coordination of efficient, data-driven, delivery of services to children and families, including referral procedures, and before and after school child care for children attending school-day, schoolyear programs;
- 5) exchange of information with other community organizations serving the needs of children and families;
- 6) recommendations made to school officials concerning transition from child care programs to preschool programs and kindergarten;
- 7) effective community engagement strategies employed to ensure diverse participation;
- 8) biannual child assessments, approved by the OEC, are performed at programs, and conducted in partnership with families;



- 9) collaboration with the OEC related to planning improvements to the state early care and education governance structure.

(f) OEC will monitor each local or regional governance partner to ensure compliance.

*Effective July 1, 2025*

#### **Section 28: Sliding Fee Parent Fee Scale**

The office shall establish a sliding fee scale for families enrolled in Early Start CT funded programs that is aligned with parent fee scale used under the Care 4 Kids state subsidy (Sec. 17b-249).

*Effective July 1, 2025*

#### **Section 29: Unexpended ECE funds for Professional Development and Technical Assistance**

(a) OEC may use up to \$2 million in unexpended Early Start CT funds for professional development, technical assistance, and to support Early Start CT programs in meeting staff qualification requirements.

(b) If any unexpended funds are not expended, the Commissioner, with the consent of the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, may use such unexpended funds that include, but are not limited to:

- 1) assist early care and education programs in meeting and maintaining accreditation requirements;
- 2) provide training in implementing preschool assessments and curricula, including training to enhance literacy teaching skills;
- 3) develop and implement best practices for parents in supporting preschool and kindergarten student learning;
- 4) develop and implement strategies for children to successfully transition to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten, including through parental engagement and whole-family supports that may be used through the two-generational initiative, or through other available resources;
- 5) provide for professional development.

*(Effective July 1, 2025)*

#### **Section 30: Accreditation**

As is current practice, programs must be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or the National Association for Family Child Care, or have Early Head Start or Head Start approval. Accreditation must be achieved within three years of entering the Early Start CT contract with the OEC. Any program that is not accredited must have an approved program plan no later than 12 months after entering into a contract with the OEC.

*Effective July 1, 2025*

#### **Section 31: Early Start CT Workforce Requirements**

(a) "Office of Early Childhood funded early care and education program" means an early care and education program that accepts state funds directly from the OEC or indirectly through OEC subcontractors, for any combination of infant, toddler, preschool and before and after school, but does

not include the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 of the general statutes.

A “designated staff member” is the person assigned the primary responsibility for a classroom of children in an OEC-funded early care and education program. A “designated qualified staff member” is a designated staff member who possesses at least one of the following:

- 1) a bachelor’s degree or higher with a concentration in early childhood education from a regionally accredited higher education institution;
- 2) a teaching certificate issued by the State Board of Education with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education;
- 3) at least 12 early childhood credits from a regionally accredited higher education institution the Office of Higher Education (OHE) deems to meet bachelor’s degree requirements without a concentration in early childhood education;
- 4) a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited higher education institution without a concentration in early childhood education, but with at least 12 applicable early childhood credits OHE determines; or permission from OHE if the designated staff member is enrolled in a higher education institution and engaged and making progress in an early childhood planned program of study leading to an early childhood bachelor’s degree.

(b) If a bachelor’s degree-designated qualified staff member is not assigned to a classroom, an associate degree-designated qualified staff member may be deemed a designated qualified staff member if the person is under the supervision of an on-site bachelor’s degree-designated qualified staff member. This provision does not apply to family child care home providers that accept state funds. These providers must meet the designated qualified staff member qualifications.

(c) Allows a bachelor’s degree-designated qualified staff member to supervise an associate degree-designated qualified staff member at an off-site location. Under the bill, the associate degree-designated qualified staff member must have at least one of the following:

- 1) an associate degree or higher with a concentration in early childhood education from a regionally accredited higher education institution;
- 2) at least 12 early childhood credits from a regionally accredited higher education institution OHE deems to meet associate degree requirements without a concentration in early childhood education;
- 3) an associate degree from a regionally accredited higher education institution without a concentration in early childhood education, but with at least 12 applicable early childhood credits OHE determines; or permission from OHE if the associate degree-designated staff member is enrolled in a higher education institution and engaged in an early childhood planned program of study leading to an early childhood associate degree.

(d) Designated staff members at each OEC-funded early care and education program must meet the bachelor’s degree level criteria described above by the following timeframes:

- 1) 25% from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027;
- 2) 50% from July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2030;
- 3) 60% on and after July 1, 2030.





*Effective July 1, 2025*

### **Section 32: State Head Start Supplement Competitive Grant**

The State Head Start Supplement will be maintained and be a competitive contract model. Requires the Commissioner to establish a state-funded competitive program in which contracts are entered into with nonprofit agencies and local and regional boards of education, which are federal Head Start grant recipients, to:

- establish extended-day and full-day, year-round, Head Start programs or expand existing Head Start programs to extended-day or full-day, year-round programs;
- enhance program quality;
- increase the number of children served in those programs that are both Head Start and Early Head Start grant recipients or delegates;
- increase the number of Early Head Start children served above those who are federally funded;
- increase the hours for children currently receiving Early Head Start services.

At least 25% of funding for contracts must be used to enhance program quality. Contracts must be funded within available appropriations, or from federal funds and private donations. All Head Start programs funded must be in compliance with federal Head Start program performance standards.

*Effective July 1, 2025*

### **Section 33: Licensing Ratios**

(a) Requires the Commissioner to implement policies and procedures needed to:

- 1) administer Sections 24 through 32 of this act;
- 2) implement infant and toddler and school-age ratios and group size requirements;
- 3) implement head teacher staffing requirements for programs that serve only school-age children.

The Commissioner may implement these policies and procedures while in the process of adopting them as regulations.

(b) Any existing regulations on infant and toddler and school-age ratios, group size requirements, and head teacher staffing requirements for programs serving only school-age children, generally applicable to child care centers and group child care homes, remain in effect until they are replaced by OEC's policies and procedures.

(c) Requires the Commissioner to post notice of intent to adopt regulations on OEC's website and on the eRegulations system within 20 days after the Commissioner implements any policies or procedures, which are valid until final regulations are adopted.

*(Effective Upon Passage)*

### **Section 34: Authority to Allocate Funds to RESCS**

Allows the Commissioner to allocate funds to regional educational service centers for professional development, technical assistance, and evaluation and program planning for early care and education





programs such as: local and regional boards of education; child care centers; group and family child care homes; and other early childhood care and education entities, as determined by the Commissioner.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

**Section 35: Pay by Classroom**

(a) Allows program to be paid by a per-child rate or an amount per classroom that has been determined by the Commissioner. The per-child cost must be at least: \$10,500 for each child ages three or four, or age five and not eligible to enroll in school; or \$13,500 for each child under age three who is in toddler or infant care and not in a preschool program. The amount per classroom for such children shall be at an equivalent rate per child multiplied by the total capacity of the classroom as determined by the Commissioner on a case-by-case basis and established in the contract.

(b) The Commissioner must develop policies and procedures governing classroom sizes, payments, and required enrollment rates. The Commissioner must use data-driven, outcomes-based contract provisions to facilitate and incentivize full enrollment.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

**Section 36: Pay by Classroom for Current Child Day Care Programs**

Makes the child day care program statute (Sec. 8-210) be in accordance with provisions of Section 35 of this act (pay by classroom).

*Effective July 1, 2024*

**Section 37 and 38: Pay by Classroom for Current School Readiness Programs**

Makes the school readiness program statute (Sec. 10-16n and 10-16q) align with the provisions of Section 35 of this act (pay by classroom).

*Effective July 1, 2024*

**Section 39: Licensed Family Child Care Home Incubator Model**

Increases access by expanding the licensed Family Child Care Incubator model statewide, allows for more than one facility in a community, removes the sunset date, and caps the total number of facilities statewide to 20.

*Effective July 1, 2024*

**Section 40: Connecticut Smart Start Program**

Removes the \$300,000 per community cap for annual operating expense grants the Connecticut Smart Start program, which provides grants for capital and operating expenses for local and regional boards of education to establish or expand preschool programs.

*Effective July 1, 2024*

**Section 41: Repealer**

The bill makes conforming changes by repealing several early childhood statutes:

- state grants for planning, constructing, renovating, developing, and operating licensed child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes (Sec. 8-210)
- various school readiness provisions, including (a) OEC's Head Start and Early Head Start competitive grant program, (b) state financial assistance and eligibility for funding school readiness programs, and (c) school readiness program requirements, including per-child cost limitations and sliding fee scale requirements (Secs. 10-16n to 10-16r)
- participation by five-year-old children in school readiness programs (Sec. 10-16t)
- school readiness program grants in transitional school districts (Sec. 10-16u)
- the competitive district grant account (Sec. 10-16aa)
- early childhood teacher credentialing (Sec. 10-520b)
- school readiness provider grants (Sec. 17b-749a)
- licensed child care center sliding fee scales (Sec. 17b-749d)

*Effective July 1, 2025*

**P.A. 24-91 (H.B. 5002) – AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00091-R00HB-05002-PA.PDF>

**Section 1: Early Childhood Care and Education Fund**

Renames the Early Childhood Education Fund the Early Childhood Care and Education Fund and establishes a framework for the fund's deposits and investments and the state treasurer's authority and powers on behalf of the fund. The funds can be received from public or private contributions, gifts, and federal, state, or local grants, and allows it to retain any earnings until they are disbursed.

The Treasurer shall invest the amounts on deposit in the fund in a manner reasonable and appropriate to achieve the objectives of the fund. The Treasurer shall give due consideration to rate of return, risk, term or maturity, diversification of the total portfolio within the fund, liquidity, the projected disbursements and expenditures and the expected payments, deposits, contributions, and gifts to be received.

The fund's assets must be continuously invested and reinvested, consistent with the fund's objectives, until they are disbursed by the comptroller.

Authorizes the treasurer, on the fund's behalf, to:

- 1) receive and invest the fund's money in any instruments, obligations, securities, or property;
- 2) enter into contractual agreements for services for the fund (e.g., legal, actuarial, administrative, and consulting) and pay for them with the fund's assets;
- 3) obtain insurance for the fund's property, assets, activities, or deposits;
- 4) apply for and accept public or private donations;
- 5) adopt regulations;
- 6) sue and be sued
- 7) establish accounts within the fund;
- 8) take other necessary action to carry out the bill's purposes.

**Section 2: Early Childhood Care and Education Fund Advisory Commission**



Creates a 23-member Early Childhood Care and Education Fund Advisory Commission within the Legislative Department which is charged to (1) review and report on the fund's financial health and status, (2) submit and update a five-year plan to the legislature on fund expenditures that would best support the state's early childhood education and child care needs, and (3) recommend legislative changes to further the fund's purposes.

The Commission consists of 14 appointed members by legislative leadership, the chairs and ranking members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, and the OPM secretary, state treasurer, state comptroller, and early childhood and education commissioners, or their designees.

Appointees:

House Speaker – 3 appointments:

- parent member of OEC's Parent Cabinet
- an early childhood teacher
- General Assembly member

Senate President – 3 appointments:

- home-based child care services
- parent of a child receiving Birth to Three services
- General Assembly member

House Majority Leader – 2 appointments:

- early childhood education program operator in Connecticut
- family resource center and be an Early Childhood Cabinet member

Senate Majority Leader – 2 appointments:

- philanthropic organization engaged in early childhood education or child care issues in Connecticut and be an Early Childhood Funder Collaborative member
- Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office and be a member of the Early Childhood Cabinet

House Minority Leader – 2 appointments:

- non-home-based child care services provider in Connecticut
- OEC Childhood Care and Development Fund administrator and a member of the Early Childhood Cabinet

Senate Minority Leader – 2 appointments:

- corporation with a significant physical presence in Connecticut that employs people who may benefit from early childhood education and state child care initiatives
- OEC representative who administers the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C program (the early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families)

The chairpersons must hold the first meeting within 90 days after the bill's passage. The commission must meet as often as the chairpersons or a majority of its members deem necessary, and a majority of members constitutes a quorum. Members are considered to have resigned from the commission if they

miss three consecutive meetings or 50% of the meetings held during the calendar year. The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee's administrative staff will serve as the advisory commission's administrative staff.

- Members must be reimbursed for necessary travel expenses, within available funds. The following commission members are eligible, within available funds, for a \$25 per hour stipend for each hour (or part of an hour) that they attend a commission meeting:
- parent member of OEC's Parent Cabinet
- parent of a child receiving Birth to Three services
- early childhood teacher
- representatives of an early childhood education program operator and home- and non-home-based child care services providers if they are employees of the respective operator or provider and (except for the home-based child care services provider representative) paid hourly.
- The travel time to and from the meeting does not count toward the stipend.

Annually, starting by January 1, 2026, the commission must report to the Appropriations, Finance, Revenue and Bonding, Education, and Children's committees on the Early Childhood Care and Education Fund's financial health and status. The report must include:

- the amount deposited in the fund and whether it is sufficient to achieve the fund's purposes
- actual or expected disbursements for the applicable fiscal year
- the fund's investments' rates of return
- any recommendations for policy changes and statutory changes to further the fund's purposes.

By January 1, 2026, the commission must also submit to these same committees a five-year plan for the fund's expenditures that would best support the state's early childhood education and child care needs.

Eliminates the requirement that the OEC Commissioner annually report to the legislature on the current Early Childhood Education Fund and the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child recommendations.

Beginning with FY 26, the commission must annually hold a public hearing on the state of the fund and of early childhood education and child care in the state.

*Effective from passage*

### **Section 3: Tri-Share Pilot Child Care Matching Program**

Establishes the Tri-Share pilot program in New London County where business, parents, and the state pay an equal share for child care. This pilot was proposed by Governor Lamont and it included in the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care. The ARPA funding package includes \$1.8 M in funding for this pilot for FY24.

The program is administered for a minimum of two years. OEC must select a regional or statewide organization to administer the program. The administrator must:

- set the program's eligibility criteria for employers and employees and recruit employers to participate;
- ensure that the child care facilities receiving program funds are OEC licensed
- disburse funds to eligible providers;

- collect and ensure timely payment from the state and participating employers and employees;
- coordinate communication between all parties;
- collect and submit deidentified data to OEC about participating employees, such as household income.

To be eligible to participate in the program:

- An employer shall have a physical facility located in New London County that is the principal workplace of its employee
- An employee shall be employed by a participating employer, reside in the state, have as such employee's principal workplace a location in New London County, and not be receiving other public assistance for child care costs.

OEC must enter into an agreement with the administrator to perform these duties. This agreement must at least include provisions governing:

- the administrator must receive, for its administrative costs, up to 10% of the funds the state allocates to the program
- the administrator must not commingle program funds with any other funds it holds or controls, other than those it receives for administrative costs
- any restrictions or prohibitions on disclosing data the administrator received or collected on participating employees
- assessment of penalties for violating any provision of the agreement or the bill's Tri-Share program provisions.

Requires the OEC Commissioner, beginning with the fiscal year immediately following the program's first year, to annually report on the program to the Appropriations, Finance, Revenue and Bonding; Education, and Children's committees. The report must at least include for the preceding fiscal year:

- number of participating employers and employees and amounts the administrator disbursed for child care costs and retained for administrative costs
- percentage of participating employees whose household incomes are below the asset limited, income constrained, employed population threshold calculated in the United Way of Connecticut's most recent ALICE report
- the Commissioner's recommendations for programmatic or legislative changes to improve the program or further its purposes

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

#### **Section 4: Wage Support Payment Program**

Establishes a one-time wage support payment program for state childhood teachers and assistant teachers employed in a state-funded program (School Readiness and Child Day Care). The estimated bonus is \$1,800 per staff member. \$9 million in unexpended state funded ECE funds will pay this bonus.

To qualify for the wage supplement payment, "early childhood teachers" and "teacher assistants" must be in a state-funded school readiness program or child care program. Both types of employees must be regularly scheduled and have been employed in these roles for at least six months at the time of the application.



To the extent federal law allows, the wage supplement payments are not considered income or assets for determining eligibility for any state-administered public assistance program, including any HUSKY program.

The OEC Commissioner must report on the program by October 1, 2025, to the Appropriations, Finance, Revenue and Bonding, Education, and Children's committees. The report must include (1) the number of eligible early childhood teachers and teacher assistants that applied and were approved for a payment, (2) the payment amounts to each group and in total; and (3) a recommendation whether the program should be expanded or extended.

*(Effective from passage)*

#### **Section 5: State Surplus Property for Early Care and Education Programs**

Requires the OEC Commissioner to notify the OPM secretary if certain surplus state property can be used to provide early childhood care and early childhood education programs.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

#### **Section 6: Liability Insurance Coverage Document for Child Care Programs**

Requires the OEC, by December 1, 2024, to consult with a nonprofit organization that provides entrepreneurial and financial education services to women to develop a document explaining the benefits of liability insurance and the potential consequences of not having liability coverage. By January 1, 2025, OEC must electronically distribute the document to licensed family child care, group child care homes, and centers.

*(Effective from passage)*

#### **Section 7: Development Milestones Posting**

School-age programs serving children older than age 5 are no longer required to post a copy of developmental milestones since school-age programs generally serve children over age 5 years of age.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

#### **Section 8: Care 4 Kids Protective Services Category – Subsidized Guardianship**

Adds "subsidized guardianship" under the Care 4 Kids protective services category. Such households are eligible for Care 4 Kids regardless of eligibility requirements and this eligibility is extended up to one year from date the subsidy is approved.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

#### **Section 9: Adherence to federal CCDF requirements for Care 4 Kids**

In lieu of Care 4 Kids regulations, requires the OEC Commissioner to administer the program by implementing the requirements of the federal Child Care Development Fund, which funds the Care 4 Kids program (45 C.F.R. § 98). The OEC Commissioner must develop policies and procedures necessary to implement these federal requirements.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*



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**Section 10: Birth to Three Services Access**

Requires a licensed child care center, group child care home or family child care home, to allow a child who has an individualized family service plan and is eligible for the Birth to Three program to receive early intervention services at such child care center, group child care home or family child care home from the service provider designated in such individualized family service plan.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

**Section 11: Updating State Regulations**

Requires the secretary of the state to correspondingly update the official online compilation of state regulations by October 1, 2024, to comply with provisions of Section 12.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

**Section 12: Repeals Care 4 Kids Regulations**

Repeals the Care 4 Kids regulations, Sections 17b-749-01 to 17b-749-23.

*(July 1, 2024)*

**Section 13: Submission of Early Childhood Education Fund Report Recommendations.**

Repeals Sec.10-511a, submission of OEC report regarding recommendations for appropriation of resources of Early Childhood Education Fund.

*(Effective from Passage)*

**P.A. 24-74 (S.B. 5) – AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCES**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00074-R00SB-00005-PA.PDF>

**Section 1: New Care 4 Kids Priority Group for Children Enrolled in Medicaid**

Adds an additional priority group to the Care 4 Kids program to include parents and caregivers with children enrolled in Medicaid. This is the last priority group in line and eligible households will still need to apply for Care 4 Kids, be placed in enrollment process be placed on the wait list. The parents or guardians of a child enrolled in Medicaid would still need to meet work/activity requirements.

**Section 4: OEC and DSS MOA to Share Medicaid Data**

Requires OEC and DSS to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share, to the extent federal law permits, Medicaid enrollment data between the two agencies for Medicaid enrollees seeking to enroll in Care 4 Kids. This change seeks to help expedite Care 4 Kids eligibility processes. This must be implemented by January 1, 2026.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

**P.A. 24-41 (H.B. 5436) – AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION, TEACHERS, PARAEDUCATORS, AND MANDATED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00041-R00HB-05436-PA.PDF>

**Section 2: Expands Educator Endorsement to Kindergarten and Prekindergarten**



Retroactively allows an educator endorsement to teach elementary grades 1 to 6, inclusive, or grades kindergarten to grade 6, issued prior to July 1, 2025, to be valid for grades prekindergarten to grade 6. Also, any new elementary endorsement issued on or after July 1, 2025, will also be valid for grades prekindergarten to grade 6.

### **Section 3: Alignment with NAEYC Standards and Competencies**

Requires, beginning July 1, 2025, that any elementary education teacher preparation program be aligned with any professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

### **Section 10: Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board**

Establishes the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board. The Board is responsible for modernizing and aligning educator preparation and certification to ensure that policies are optimized to attract and retain effective and diverse professionals for employment in the state's public schools. The Board is charged with developing standards and proposals for regulations or legislation relating to educator preparation and certification.

The Board shall develop an annual report that includes a detailed summary of the substance and disposition of any standards and proposals for regulations or legislation developed by the board or the State Board of Education. The Board must submit this annual report, and annually thereafter, by January 1, 2025, to the Education Committee.

The OEC Commissioner, or designee, shall serve on the Board.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

### **P.A. 24-49 (S.B. 215) – AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH CAMPS**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00049-R00SB-00215-PA.PDF>

#### **Section 1: Youth Camp Inspections**

The OEC shall inspect facilities granted an initial license 72 hours after the licensee commences operations, and if the agency approves a correction action plan for the licensee, not later than 72 hours, and every week thereafter until the OEC has determined the licensee is fully compliant with the correction action plan. The office shall give:

- Priority to applicants for an original license and those licensees who operate a youth camp for a single week, provided inspections of such single week youth camps are conducted not later than 48 hours after commencement of operations.
- Less priority to those licensees who have received national accreditation from the American Camp Association or under the Boy Scouts of America's National Camp Accreditation Program, or
- Against whom there were no complaints or violations filed during the previous five years.

#### **Section 2: Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council**

Establishes a Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council within the OEC, that provides advice to the Commissioner on matters relating to safety issues at youth camps. The membership must at least include the following 11 appointees who serve three-year terms without compensation.

- 1) a Connecticut Camping Association representative appointed by the House speaker;



- 2) a Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association representative, appointed by the Senate president pro tempore;
- 3) two representatives of Connecticut nonprofit youth service organizations with a camping program, appointed one each by the House and Senate majority leaders;
- 4) two representatives of day camps, appointed one each by the House minority leader and Children's Committee House chairperson;
- 5) two representatives of resident camps, appointed one each by the Senate minority leader and Children's Committee Senate chairperson;
- 6) a sports camp representative and an independent school camp representative, both appointed by the governor; and
- 7) a representative of a university that hosts or conducts a summer camp, appointed by the OEC Commissioner.

The Advisory Council must meet at least quarterly and the OEC Commissioner must meet with the Council at least once annually. At that meeting, members must elect the chairpersons of the Council. Appointments must be made by September 15 and the Advisory Council must meet no later than September 15, 2024. Any member who fails to attend 50% of all meetings held during any calendar year must be deemed to have resigned from the council. Requires OEC to provide administrative assistance to facilitate the council's activities.

### **Section 3: Discretion to Refuse, Suspend or Revoke a License**

The Commissioner has the discretion to refuse to license or to suspend or revoke the license if a person held a license to establish, conduct or maintain a youth camp in another state that was revoked by that state's licensing authority.

*(Effective July 1, 2024)*

### **P.A. 24-93 (S.B 154) – AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS AND ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00093-R00SB-00154-PA.PDF>

### **Section 9: Allows Administration of Epinephrine in License-Exempt Child Care Programs**

By law, OEC licensed child care providers are authorized to administer epinephrine for emergency first aid to a child in their care who experiences an allergic reaction and does not have a prior written parent or guardian authorization or prior written qualified medical professional order for the provider to administer epinephrine. This bill broadens this authorization to include child care providers that are exempt from licensing. The staff person administering epinephrine must be trained according to statutory requirements.

*Effective July 1, 2024*

### **S.A. 24-8 (H.B. 5369) – AN ACT CONCERNING A BENEFITS CLIFF STUDY**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/SA/PDF/2024SA-00008-R00HB-05369-SA.PDF>

Requires the Two-Generational Initiative, in collaboration with DSS and DOH, and the Office of Workforce Strategy, to study strategies to mitigate benefits cliffs and support the economic mobility of public assistance program beneficiaries. A report must be submitted to the Human Services Committee by January 1, 2025.



*Effective from passage*

**P.A. 24-82 (H.B. 5003) – AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND CHILD NUTRITION**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00082-R00HB-05003-PA.PDF>

**Section 3: SDE and OEC Collaboration on Child Nutrition Outreach**

Existing law requires the State Department of Education to administer, within available appropriations, a child nutrition outreach program to (1) increase participation in the federal School Breakfast, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food programs and (2) secure federal reimbursement for these programs. The bill now requires SDE to do so in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

By law, SDE's outreach program must encourage child care centers, group child care homes, and family day care homes to participate in the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP). The bill specifies that this includes sharing relevant data between OEC and SDE.

*Effective July 1, 2024*

**Section 8: Working Group to Expand Participation in Federal Nutrition Programs**

Requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity to convene a working group to study and recommend strategies for expanding participation in federal nutrition programs.

Members include the Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood, or designee. Members include:

- one member each appointed by the House Speaker, Senate President, House Majority Leader, Senate Majority Leader; House Minority Leader, and Senate Minority Leader;
- CSEO executive director;
- Commissioners of Education, Early Childhood, and Social Services, or their designees;
- one member appointed by the governor, who must be a research expert in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and work for a food policy center at a public higher education institution

The Commission shall schedule the first meeting of the working group, which shall be held no later than 60 days after passage of the bill. Members of the working group must select two co-chairpersons from among the members of the working group.

The administrative staff of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall serve as administrative staff of the working group.

Not later than January 1, 2026, the co-chairpersons of the working group must report to the joint Education, Children and Human Services committees regarding the recommendations of the working group. The working group shall terminate on the date that it submits the report or January 1, 2026, whichever is later.

*Effective Upon Passage*

**P.A. 24-151 (H.B. 5524) – AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE AND CONCERNING PROVISIONS RELATD TO STATE AND MUNICIPAL TAX ADMINISTRATION, GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS**

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/ACT/PA/PDF/2024PA-00151-R00HB-05524-PA.PDF>



**Section 118:** Establishes an Office of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement within the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The office oversees the implementation of the 10-year plan to reduce concentrated poverty and serving as the facilitator to coordinate communication between the various parties and disseminate information in a timely and efficient manner.

The Office of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement shall develop a plan for the pilot participating concentrated poverty census tract or group of tracts, as applicable, to eradicate, over 10 years, the levels of concentrated poverty in the service area of the community development corporation, evidenced by a reduction, to 20% or lower, in the percentage of households who reside in concentrated poverty census tract or group of tracts and have incomes below the federal poverty level, as well as sustained improvements in community infrastructure and other underlying conditions that serve to prolong concentrated poverty and economic inertia in such census tract or group of tracts. In developing the plan, the Office shall consult with the Office of Community Economic Development Assistance, the Office of Workforce Strategy, the Office of Early Childhood, the Department of Education, the Office of Policy and Management, the applicable community development corporations serving the participating concentrated poverty census tract or group of tracts and the applicable municipal chief elected officials and any other public or private entity the DECD Commissioner deems relevant or necessary.

On or before June 1, 2025, the DECD Commissioner shall inform the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee of the progress made in the development of the 10-year plan. Not later than January 1, 2026, the commissioner shall submit the plan to the General Assembly and the Office of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement shall immediately commence overseeing the implementation of the plan.

Not later than February 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development shall submit a report to the General Assembly, the Office of Workforce Strategy, the Office of Early Childhood and the Office of Policy and Management that summarizes the progress being made by the Office of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement in implementing the 10-year plan, the status of any projects pending or undertaken for the participating concentrated poverty census tract or group of tracts and any other information the commissioner or the Office of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement deems relevant or necessary.

**Section 155 & 156: Reimbursement Rate Bonus for Early Childhood Projects**

Increases the reimbursement rate bonus to 15 percentage points for certain elementary and early childhood projects and establishes a new 15 percentage point bonus for buildings used exclusively for early childhood care and education.

Current law gives a five-percentage-point reimbursement rate increase for new or expansion elementary school building projects that include space for an early care and education program. The bill (1) increases this bonus rate to 15 percentage points and (2) broadens its availability to include an early childhood care and education program providing services for children from birth to age five. As under existing law, recipient districts must maintain the program for at least 10 years. The overall reimbursement rate cannot exceed 100%.



Additionally, the bill establishes a new 15 percentage point bonus for a building or facility to be used exclusively by a school board for an early childhood care and education program providing services for children from birth to age five. The recipient district must maintain the program for at least 20 years. The overall reimbursement rate cannot exceed 100%.

*Effective July 1, 2024*