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# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Office of  
Early Childhood

Beth Bye  
*Commissioner Designate*

### Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner-Designate Office of Early Childhood Before the Committee on Children

**Re: HB 5165 – An Act Requiring Background Checks on Overnight Camp Counselors**  
**HB 6184 – An Act Concerning Early Childhood Interventions at Certain Facilities**  
**Thursday, February 14, 2019**

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Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Green, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner-Designate of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood advances a family-centered approach to support young children and their families. OEC provides a unified vision to support coordination and alignment between early childhood services. Through our core programs, we support infant and toddler care, preschool, home visiting, child care and youth camp licensing, home visiting, and early intervention to address developmental delays. Through this integrated strategy and collaboration with other state agencies and early childhood partners, OEC works to advance better coordinated, more cost-effective services that yield measurable results for Connecticut's children and families.

I am here today to testify on two bills:

- HB 5165 – An Act Requiring Background Checks on Overnight Camp Counselors
- HB 6184 – An Act Concerning Early Childhood Interventions at Certain Facilities

**HB 5165 – An Act Requiring Background Checks on Overnight Camp Counselors** has a well-intended goal: to ensure that camp counselors have submitted and received clearance of a criminal background check. While well-intended, under Connecticut's current background check system, this goal is unachievable.

We take background checks very seriously for child safety and to meet federal requirements. The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Reauthorization requires that staff in licensed child care centers, child care homes, group child care homes, and youth camps submit to a comprehensive background check, which includes a finger-based criminal records check. In addition, CCDF requires that background checks are processed within 45 days.

Currently however, it takes three to four months for the OEC to receive the results of fingerprint-based criminal records checks after processing through the State Police. For youth camps, where

staff are hired in the late spring, the background checks would not be finalized until late summer or early fall, after the camp season has ended.

The Office of Early Childhood is collaborating with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to resolve this issue. This is a systemic concern, which extends beyond child care and youth camps to many other entities who must submit to background checks. For the Office of Early Childhood, our concern is two-fold:

- 1) We fully support ensuring the health and safety of children through comprehensive fingerprint-based background checks and are committed to make this happen.
- 2) Our agency must meet the CCDF background check requirements by October of 2019; if the requirement is not met, Connecticut faces the real risk of losing at least 5 percent of its \$67 million federal allocation.

We support the goal of **HB 6184 – An Act Concerning Early Childhood Interventions at Certain Facilities**. The statement of purpose identifies child care centers as among the facilities. As we all know, the early years of a child's life are the most critical – by age 3, 80 percent of a child's brain is developed. Many factors influence the development of a child's brain, including relationships, experiences, and the environment. Early intervention services can have a profound positive impact on a young child's healthy physical and social emotional development.

The Office of Early Childhood is home to several early childhood intervention and prevention services, including Birth to Three, Home Visiting, Child Development Infoline, and Help Me Grow. Through the Child Development Infoline, parents can access the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, which is a family-friendly tool to help a parent track their child's development and identify potential developmental concerns. If a concern is identified, Child Development Infoline connects and links families to appropriate existing services.

The OEC has discussed this proposed concept with Rep. Kara Rochelle, the introducer of the bill. We are willing to work with proponents of the bill to clarify the intent and refine the language.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer your questions now and/or at a later date, as well as continue to work together to better serve our families with young children.