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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

Beth Bye
Commissioner

Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner Office of Early Childhood Before the Education Committee

**Re: 936 – An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood
Wednesday, March 6 2019**

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify on SB 936 – An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood.

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood advances a family-centered approach to support young children and their families. 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 yield measurable results for Connecticut's youngest children and families.

Section 1 allows the Care 4 Kids income eligibility to be set up to 85% of State Medium Income (SMI), as prescribed by the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) law. This change from 75% to 85% of SMI aligns with federal requirements.

Section 1 also deletes Priority Group 7 under the Care 4 Kids statute. This priority group, designated for any household member participating in the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant program, was never implemented.

Sections 2 and 3 creates a 45-day grace period for providing immunizations and physical examination records for foster children upon enrolling in a child care center, group child care home, or family child care home. This would allow a child who is in foster care to immediately enroll in an early childhood setting and give the foster parents adequate time to locate the child's physical and immunization records. The federal CCDF new rules require that states prioritize children who are foster children for child care services. The Office of Early Childhood included the grace period provision in its CCDF state plan.

Section 4 addresses comprehensive background checks to fully meet CCDF components of a comprehensive background check spelled out in 45 CFR 98.43. Connecticut's statute needs to conform with federal law.

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Sections 5 and 6 creates a new licensing summary probation authority. Current statutes allow for the Office of Early Childhood to issue a summary suspension or a revocation of a license. Summary suspension of a license results in children immediately losing care. Revocation of a license is a lengthy legal process and most often results in closure of the program. A summary probation would allow a program to remain open while the hearing process moves forward being subject to legal stipulations required by the Office of Early Childhood. This option mitigates major disruption of child care for families and provides continuity of care for the child.

Section 7 establishes a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 for failure of a child care center or group child care home to provide a 30 day written notification to the agency, staff and parents of the proposed closure date. A 30-day written notification of planned closure is necessary to provide staff the time needed to seek alternative employment and for parents to seek a new child care setting for their child. Without the 30-day notice, there is the potential for a child to be placed in an unhealthy and unsafe environment.

Section 8 changes the reporting period for early care and education staff qualifications compliance from July 1 to January 1 annually. The OEC does not have complete data on July 1. Much more accurate data is available by January 1 to produce a meaningful report.

Section 9 is a technical correction to align the School Readiness eligibility and phase-out period for a length of three years.

Section 10 deletes reference to an obsolete federal act in the Even Start statute. The federal act governing the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program no longer exists.

Section 11 clarifies that the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for a child enrolled in the Birth to Three program can be signed by the child's pediatrician or a primary care provider or qualified personnel as defined in the Birth to Three statute, section 17a-248.

Section 12 deletes language allowing the signature of an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) for an ISFP to be sufficient. This language is unnecessary because the current Birth to Three State Plan Amendment allows for any qualified personnel defined in Section 17a-248 to sign the ISFP, including an APRN.

Section 13 repeals the requirement for OEC to conduct a trend analysis of certain bachelor's degree programs in early childhood education or child development. This is no longer needed since legislation passed in 2018 allowing degrees from any accredited college to be an additional option in meeting the designated qualified staff member status for state-funded programs.

Thank you for your time and attention to these proposals. I am happy to answer your questions now and/or at a later date. I am committed to work together – with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates and parents - to better serve our families with young children.