



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

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Testimony of Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D., Commissioner
Office of Early Childhood
Before the Education Committee
Re: H.B. 5466 – An Act Concerning Criminal History Records Checks for Household
Members of a Family Child Care Home or Group Child Care Home
Wednesday, March 2, 2016

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood.

I am testifying today in support of H.B. 5466 – An Act Concerning Criminal History Records Checks for Household Members of a Family Child Care Home or Group Child Care Home. This bill would statutorily enforce a practice that has been in place for many years that all household members who are 16 years of age or older in a licensed family child care home shall submit to criminal background checks.

The child care licensing program in the Office of Early Childhood, previously in the Department of Public Health, has for a long time required that all household members who are 16 years of age or older residing in a licensed family child care home submit to criminal background checks. Recently, the State Police conducted an informational audit of the OEC licensing background check system. The audit's preliminary findings document that there is no statutory citation requiring background checks of household members age 16 and older in a licensed family child care home. The State Police has notified the OEC about this issue and informed our agency that that this requirement must be put into statute to grant the state the authority to process these background checks.

The OEC feels strongly that household members age 16 and older in a licensed family child care home submit to background checks to ensure the health and safety of young children in the care of the family child care provider. This bill would put into statute a requirement that the OEC, and previously DPH, has enforced as a long-standing best practice. The bill defines a household member as any person who resides in the family child care home, such as the licensee's spouse or children, boarders and any other occupant.

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The OEC requests that Section 4 and 5 of the bill be deleted. Group child care homes should not be included in this legislation. These group child care settings are different from family child care homes, do not always operate in a private residence, and are governed by the statutes and regulations that govern child care centers. All staff in child care centers and group child care homes that provide direct care to children must undergo background checks. However, adults who may be in other parts of a building that houses a child care center or group child care home that is not part of the licensed space do not need to undergo background checks. For example, a child care center may operate in a school which has offices staffed by adults not connected to the child care program. These adults, who do not have unsupervised access to the children, are not required to have background checks. Unlike family child care homes, group child care homes must always have a minimum of two staff on site at all times and children may never be left alone, even when sleeping. Group child care home and child care center licenses are issued to the program, while family child care home licenses are issued to the individual provider.

The OEC recommends some other minor technical changes to the bill. On line 42 of Section 2, “or reside in” should be deleted as the Commissioner would not deem a person unsuitable to reside in a family child care home. On line 57 of Section 2, “or a household member” should be deleted as a household member is not required to comply with the regulations that govern child care providers, nor is a household member responsible for conducting, operating or maintaining the family child care home.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am here to listen to your thoughts and answer any questions.