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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 Housing Committee
H.B. 5121 – An Act Concerning Certain Protections for
Group and Family Child Care Homes
Tuesday, February 18, 2020**

Good morning Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. My name is Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify concerning H.B. 5121 – An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes.

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 core our 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. The Office of Early Childhood is working toward better coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.

We support the intent of H.B. 5121. The Office of Early Childhood licenses family child care homes, group child care homes, and child care centers. This bill seeks to remove barriers to operating a family child care home or group child care home. The Office of Early Childhood seeks to support and expand the number of licensed child care programs in our communities, in large part to address the acute shortage of infant and toddler care across the state. Family child care homes and group family child care homes are part of the small business mix in Connecticut and we must support them as part of an economic development strategy.

I want to clarify that a licensed group child care home may operate *outside of a private residence*. Inspections and approvals conducted by local officials are relied upon to ensure all licensed group child care homes and child care centers are healthy and safe for all occupants, including children. Such inspections include, but are not limited to, an examination of fire safety, structural integrity, provisions for parking, and environmental conditions.

It is unclear whether Section 3 of this bill would exempt all licensed group child care homes from such oversight, *including those that operate outside of a private residence*. The Office of Early Childhood has concerns if this is the intent of this bill. This may simply be an oversight. We are happy to work with the Committee on language. It is imperative that Connecticut ensures the health and safety of our youngest children.

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In closing, family child care makes up a core component of our child care system. These providers care for our youngest children, providing them with a healthy, safe, nurturing environment during a period of rapid growth and development. Family child homes are an economic driver, both in their role as small businesses and enabling parents to get to work and economically sustaining their families. As part of the state's workforce development plan, we must support the growth and fiscal stability of these small business owners. This bill will move us in the right direction.

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