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# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye  
*Commissioner*

**Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood  
Before the Committee on Children  
H.B. 5243 – An Act Concerning Adult Sexual Misconduct  
March 1, 2022**

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Good afternoon, Senator Anwar, Representative Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Dauphinais and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. My name is Beth Bye. I am Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify concerning **H.B. 5243 – An Act Concerning Adult Sexual Misconduct.**

Section 10 of this bill proposes to require the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to consult with the State Department of Education (SDE) and Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in the development of a protocol and checklist that would be used by local or regional boards of education and providers of child care services when investigating allegations of child abuse or neglect by employees. As currently drafted, this bill suggests that child care programs will be responsible for the investigation of child abuse and neglect allegations when this is a statutory responsibility of DCF.

Staff of child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes are mandated reporters, and therefore, are required to report to DCF as soon as practicable, but not later than 12 hours if they have reason to suspect or believe that any child has been abused or neglected or is placed at imminent risk of serious harm. The OEC frequently reminds child care providers of their obligation to make a report to DCF immediately upon suspicion of abuse or neglect rather than waiting for the results of their own investigation. As currently drafted, this bill has the potential of causing delayed reporting to DCF as programs focus on their own investigations. We are happy to work with the Committee to address this.

It is still necessary for child care programs to conduct some form of review and information gathering for their own personnel purposes and administrative oversight, and to collect enough minimum facts to make a report to DCF. The appropriate way to do this is to make the report to DCF as soon as practicable as required and then communicate with the investigators (DCF, OEC, police as applicable) to ensure there is no interference with the formal investigations. These nuances could be part of what is incorporated into the protocol and checklist if that is what is envisioned by this proposal. However, it would be important that the language in statute is clear

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that this protocol would not absolve schools or child care programs from their responsibilities as mandated reporters nor empower these entities to conduct their own investigations into allegations of abuse and neglect in place of DCF.

OEC and DCF have discussed this bill and we are in alignment concerning Section 10.

Section 13 of this bill requires SDE and OEC to develop a checklist to be used by local and regional boards of education and child care centers, group child care homes and family child care home providers to screen applicants and prospective employees during the hiring process. The current licensing regulations for child care programs require that prospective employees undergo a check of the state's child abuse and neglect registry and fingerprint-based national and state criminal background check. As currently drafted, the intent and scope of the intended checklist is unclear.

Thank you for giving me the time to testify. We are happy to answer any questions.

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***About the OEC***

*The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) advances a two-generation family-centered approach in our pursuit of optimal health, safety and learning outcomes for young children. 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. The OEC is working toward better coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.*