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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 Housing Committee
S.B. 291 – An Act Concerning Certain Protections for
Group and Family Child Care Homes
Thursday, March 10, 2022**

Good afternoon, Senator Lopes, Representative Williams, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify concerning **S.B. 291 – An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes**.

The Office of Early Childhood supports the intent of S.B. 291 that addresses licensed family child care homes and group child care homes, which are licensed by the OEC. This bill seeks to remove barriers to operating a family child care home or group child care home. Our agency 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. Working with a consultant team, which has provided pro bono support to the OEC, we have discovered that while licensed family child care homes make up 10% of the supply, they have the potential to address 50% of the shortage in infant and toddler care in this state. We also identified that zoning can sometimes pose a barrier to expansion.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the vital need for child care, in particular family child care homes and group child care homes, as they are smaller programs that often appeal to families. Family child care homes and group child care homes are part of the small business mix in Connecticut, they support our workforce, and we must include them as part of an economic development strategy.

Licensed family child care homes are regulated by our agency. Our licensing requirements are among the most robust across all states. Connecticut's statutes and child care licensing regulations work to ensure the health and safety of young children. Our licensing inspectors work closely with family child care providers to ensure they understand the need for and adhere to these licensing requirements. At times, we communicate with local officials to address health and safety concerns related to such things such as lead, sanitation, or fire safety.

In closing, family child care homes and group child care homes make 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 and group child care homes are an economic driver, both in their role as a small businesses and a workforce support. They have served as dedicated frontline workers throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency. 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 OEC is committed to work together—with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates, and parents—to better serve our families with young children.

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.