



Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

# 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 Committee on Children

**S.B. 2 – An Act Concerning the Mental, Physical and Emotional Wellness of Children**

**S.B. 1047 – An Act Authorizing the Commissioner of Early Childhood  
to Enter into Certain Contracts**

**S.B. 1054 – An Act Concerning the Membership of the Youth Camp Advisory Safety  
Council in the Office of Early Childhood**

**Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

Good morning, Senator Maher, Representative Linehan, Senator Seminara, Representative Dauphinais, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. The OEC submits testimony concerning three bills before this Committee.

The OEC appreciates the intent of **S.B. 2 – An Act Concerning the Mental, Physical and Emotional Wellness of Children.**

Regarding Section 4 of the bill, the \$200 General Administrative Payment (GAP) has been a critical fiscal support for the Birth to Three system. The Governor’s budget includes the \$200 GAP payment to continue through FY 24. We have not anticipated this payment to continue in the out years as we are undertaking a Birth to Three cost study and rate analysis with Public Consulting Group (PCG). The study will equip the OEC and its sister agency, Department of Social Services (DSS), with needed information and a recommendation for the Birth-to-Three Medicaid rate. The study is projected for completion in 2024. The intent is that the rate study and cost analysis will help inform the rate setting process for the Birth to Three system.

Regarding Section 5 of the bill, the OEC supports the individualized family service plan (IFSP) be translated and provided in Spanish for any family whose preference is receiving the form in Spanish. The OEC is currently revising the IFSP, and the updated form will be released later this fiscal year. With the changes, the IFSP will be translated into the top 10 spoken and written languages in the Birth to Three system, which includes Spanish.

The OEC also understands the importance of interpretation for families and recognizes the current gap in reimbursement for Spanish interpretation. We acknowledge the intent of providing early intervention services from Spanish-speaking qualified personnel and Spanish-speaking service coordinators. In best practice, the interventionist and service coordinator supporting the family would speak the family's native language. Like many industries, the Birth to Three system has experienced a significant decline in its workforce and, in particular, we have had difficulties hiring Spanish-speaking staff. With current staffing, it is impossible to provide Spanish

interpretation without the help of contracted interpreters. We estimate it would cost \$1.2M annually to cover the cost of Spanish-speaking contracted interpreters for our Birth to Three families, which is not currently allocated for in the proposed budget. We would, of course, welcome suggestions and recommendations on how to expand our Spanish-speaking workforce and hope to partner with the legislature on this effort.

**S.B. 1047 - An Act Authorizing the Commissioner of Early Childhood to Enter into Certain Contracts** would allow the Commissioner to allocate funding to the Regional Educational Service Centers to provide professional development services, technical assistance and evaluation, and program planning and implementation activities to local and regional boards of education, School Readiness programs, child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes, and other early childhood care and education entities. This bill would allow the OEC to continue funding protocol that was allowed when procurement policies were less restrictive under the COVID-19 public health emergency. Under these COVID conditions, OEC was able to direct funds quickly to the RESCs to provide critical supports to child care providers facing duress during the pandemic. The public health emergency has since been lifted and these procurement allowances are no longer in place. Standard practice is state agencies issue an RFP or RFA for contracted work. We also are aware that SDE has been able to use similar statutory language related to the RESCs for critical educational needs. We are available and happy to meet with Committee chairs and proponents of the bill to come to a thoughtful resolution.

**S.B. 1054 – An Act Concerning the Membership of the Youth Camp Advisory Safety Council in the Office of Early Childhood** would add two “private camps” to any Council within the OEC that advises the agency on youth camp safety issues. The Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council was originally enacted in state statute in 1970 yet was sunsetted around 1979. Since such time, the Council has continued to voluntarily meet with the Youth Camp Division of the OEC on an ad hoc basis. Members are appointed to a two-year term by the Commissioner and make recommendations to the OEC concerning safety issues in youth camp activities based on their expertise. The current members represent nonprofit day and residential youth camps, for-profit day and residential youth camps, nonprofit residential special needs youth camps, college and university youth camps, and community members. The OEC is available and happy to meet with Committee chairs and proponents of the bill.

Thank you for your time and attention. The OEC is committed to work together—with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates, and parents—to better serve our families with young children.