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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 Commerce Committee  
S.B. 249 – An Act Concerning the Early Childhood Business Incubator Program  
March 5, 2024**

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Greetings, Senator Hartley, Representative Meskers, Senator Martin, Representative Harrison, and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify in strong support of **S.B. 249 – An Act Concerning the Early Childhood Business Incubator Program**.

The earliest years of a child's life shape who that child will grow up to be, affecting their future health, education, and success. The Office of Early Childhood focuses on children from birth to age five. Helping young children learn, develop, and overcome barriers will have benefits that last a lifetime. A key part of our work is supporting the providers, teachers, and other professionals who have dedicated their careers to caring for and educating children.

Governor Lamont established the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care 11 months ago and charged panel members with crafting a five-year plan to build an equitable, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that ensures that every child has a sound educational foundation that will prepare them to grow, learn, and succeed. The plan provides a vision for Connecticut's child care infrastructure that will improve access to quality care for thousands of families through efforts aimed at affordability and stabilizing and expanding child care businesses and improving the quality of programs. The plan was informed by thousands of providers, parents, businesses, and interested residents.

One promising model to expand and stabilize the child care industry is Connecticut's licensed family child care incubator model, the first in the nation. This pilot program, established by P.A. 21-171, allows a family child care home license to be issued to a provider who wishes to operate outside a private family home if they've partnered with an organization to provide child care services in a space provided by the organization, and is further approved by the Office of Early Childhood. This model allows licensed family child care providers to work in shared space, participate in comprehensive training, create business efficiencies such as backroom administrative operations, and work together as a team. A business incubator provides a

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supportive place to launch a child care business and learn business skills that are necessary to build a profitable enterprise.

An example of a community working to establish an incubator program through this pilot is the incubator project in New Britain. This group has worked over the past few years to identify a building, bring the building into compliance with licensing requirements and local zoning codes, hire a director, recruit and train child care providers, among many other required tasks. We anticipate this first-ever incubator in the nation will soon become licensed by the Office of Early Childhood and are excited for the opportunity this provides not only for providers who may not otherwise have space appropriate for this service, but also for the additional capacity this builds in communities throughout the state.

The law, as originally written, allows for one incubator location to be established in each of the cities of New Britain, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Hartford, Danbury, or Waterbury. The pilot program is set to expire June 30, 2026.

Senate Bill 249 proposes to remove the sunset date, allows for more than one incubator project in a community, and expands beyond the seven communities identified in the statute to any community throughout the state, but limits the total number of incubators to 20 across the state. We are supportive of these proposed changes. The OEC, in conversations with proponents of this bill, requested to cap the total number of communities to 20 for the time being because we need to gauge the capacity of our licensing staff to provide technical assistance to get the projects licensed and ready to operate.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. The OEC is committed to work together—with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates, and parents—to better serve our families with young children.

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*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 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. OEC is working toward better-coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.*