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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 5279**

#### ***AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes the following changes in the early childhood education statutes:

1. expands the Early Childhood Cabinet’s membership and changes its attendance and compensation requirements (§ 1);
2. makes a technical change to the criminal history records check system that certain child care providers who accept state child care subsidies must use (§ 2);
3. extends the validity of the early childhood teacher credential issued by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to certain people with associate degrees (§ 3);
4. changes family child care home staffing and enrollment requirements (§ 4); and
5. reduces the number of weeks a child care program must operate to be a “year-round” program, lowering the threshold from 50 to 48 weeks per year and impacting certain OEC program operations (§ 5).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022, except the provisions on criminal history records checks (§ 2) and early childhood teacher credentials (§ 3) take effect upon passage.

#### **§ 1 — EARLY CHILDHOOD CABINET MEMBERSHIP**

The Early Childhood Cabinet is an advisory body to OEC. The bill

increases the cabinet's membership from 25 to 27, adding two appointments to the governor's eight in current law. These new appointees must be (1) an individual who is a licensed family child care home provider and member of a staffed family child care network (i.e., a regional community initiative offering ongoing support services) identified by the OEC commissioner and (2) a parent recommended by an OEC-appointed parent advisory group. The bill specifies that the parent member appointed by the governor may be compensated, within available appropriations, for his or her time at and travel to cabinet meetings; current law prohibits all other members from receiving compensation (including other parent members).

Additionally, the bill eliminates from current law the mechanism that removes members from the cabinet if they miss three consecutive meetings or 50% of all meetings in one calendar year. By law, the cabinet must meet at least quarterly.

### **§ 3 — EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER CREDENTIAL**

By law, OEC may issue an early childhood teaching credential to people who hold either an associate degree or a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education. The degree program must be (1) from a regionally accredited institution and (2) approved by OEC and either (a) the Board of Regents for Higher Education or (b) the Office of Higher Education.

Under current law, this credential's validity ends on June 30, 2021, when issued to someone who holds an associate degree. The bill removes the credential's termination date, making it valid indefinitely, as when issued by the office to someone with a bachelor's degree.

### **§ 4 — FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME STAFFING AND ENROLLMENT**

Under current law, a family child care home may care for up to six children, including the provider's own children who are not in school full time, plus three more children during the regular school year who are in school full time. However, if the provider has more than three children who are in school full time, then all of the provider's children may attend.

The bill maintains the base maximum number of enrolled children at six throughout the year, including the provider's own children who are not enrolled in school full time, in situations where the provider does not employ an OEC-approved assistant or substitute. But if an assistant or substitute is employed, the bill allows for up to nine children to be cared for, even if none of the children attend school full time.

As is the case under current law, family child care home providers, during the school year, may care for up to three more children in school full time, including the provider's own children, for a maximum total of nine, without the help of an assistant or substitute staffer. (And if the provider has more than three children who are the provider's own and are in school full time, the provider may care for them as well.)

By law and unchanged by the bill, during the summer months when school is not in session, if the family child care home provider employs an OEC-approved assistant or substitute staff member, then the provider may care for up to three additional school-aged children. As under existing law, (1) an assistant or substitute staff member is not required if all of the additional school-age children are the provider's own and (2) if the provider has more than three school-age children, all of them may attend during the summer months, even if this means more than three additional school-age children are attending.

## **§ 5 — YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM DEFINITION**

The bill lowers, from 50 to 48, the number of weeks per year that a child care program must generally operate to be considered a "year-round" program. This new definition broadens the potential number of (1) school readiness programs that must use the excess portion of their per-pupil school readiness grant for salary staff increases and (2) child care programs to which the commissioner must give preference when (a) purchasing services and (b) awarding a supplemental quality enhancement grant.

### ***School Readiness Staff Salary Increases***

By law, school readiness programs are non-religious, state-funded programs that provide a developmentally appropriate learning

experience for children age three to five years old who are too young to enroll in kindergarten.

Existing law requires state-licensed school readiness programs that operate full-day, year-round programs and receive school readiness per-pupil state grants to use any grant amount exceeding \$8,927 per child exclusively to increase the salary of individuals directly responsible for teaching or caring for children in school readiness program classrooms (CGS § 10-16p(l)). By reducing the number of weeks that a school readiness program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the bill broadens the potential number of school readiness programs that must use their per-pupil grant excess for staff salary increases.

#### ***Purchase of Child Care Services***

By law, if the OEC commissioner directly purchases child care services, she must give preference to providers of full-day and year-round programs. These programs may be provided by public schools, child care centers, group or family child care homes, family resource centers, or Head Start, among others (CGS § 17b-749a). By reducing the number of weeks that a child care program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the bill broadens the potential number of child care programs to which the commissioner must give preference when purchasing services.

#### ***Supplemental Quality Enhancement Grant***

By law, the OEC’s supplemental quality enhancement grant program provides, within available appropriations, competitive grants to child care centers or school readiness programs to help them enhance their programs through accreditation or the purchase of educational equipment, among other things. The commissioner must give priority to applicant programs that operate year-round, among other criteria (CGS § 17b-749c). By reducing the number of weeks that a program must operate to be considered a “year-round” program, the bill broadens the potential number of programs to which the commissioner must give preference when awarding this grant.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Related Bill***

SB 2, § 19 (File 276), favorably reported by the Committee on Children, contains similar language to § 4 of the bill. It requires family child care homes to employ an OEC-approved assistant to care for more than six and up to nine children year round rather than only during the summer and for children that are not the provider's own children. It also allows all of a family child care home provider's own children to be cared for by the provider during any time of year.

SB 2, §§ 1 & 2, also contains language impacting § 5 of the bill, specifically affecting school readiness grants. Beginning in FY 23, it (1) raises the per child cost cap for the school readiness program (2) and increases the amount that programs must use for salary increases.

HB 5465, § 11, favorably reported by the Education Committee, contains similar language to § 4 of the bill, relating to family child care staffing and enrollment.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 39    Nay 0    (03/25/2022)