



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 404

January Session, 2023

Substitute House Bill No. 6686

House of Representatives, April 4, 2023

The Committee on Education reported through REP. CURREY of the 11th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

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

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of section 10-16p of the
2 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
3 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

4 (2) "Eligible children" means children [three and] from birth to four
5 years of age, inclusive, and children five years of age who are not
6 eligible to enroll in school pursuant to section 10-15c, or who are eligible
7 to enroll in school and will attend a school readiness program pursuant
8 to section 10-16t, as amended by this act;

9 Sec. 2. Subsections (c) to (l), inclusive, of section 10-16p of the general
10 statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof
11 (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

12 (c) The commissioner shall establish a grant program to provide
13 spaces in accredited school readiness programs located in priority
14 school districts, as described in section 10-266p, or in former priority
15 school districts for eligible children. The state, acting by and in the
16 discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, in consultation with

17 a town or regional school readiness council, may enter into a contract
18 with a municipality, local or regional board of education, regional
19 educational service center, family resource center, provider of a child
20 care center, group child care home or family child care home, as
21 described in section 19a-77, Head Start program, preschool program or
22 other program that meets such standards established by the
23 commissioner, to provide, within available appropriations, state
24 financial assistance. Eligibility shall be determined for a five-year period
25 based on an applicant's designation as a priority school district for the
26 initial year of application, except that if a school district that receives a
27 grant pursuant to this subsection is no longer designated as a priority
28 school district at the end of such five-year period, such former priority
29 school district shall continue to be eligible to receive a grant pursuant to
30 this subsection. Grant awards shall be made [annually] for the fiscal year
31 ending June 30, 2023, and biennially thereafter, contingent upon
32 available funding and a satisfactory annual evaluation. The chief elected
33 official of such town and the superintendent of schools for such priority
34 school district or former priority school district shall submit a plan for
35 the expenditure of grant funds and responses to the local request for
36 proposal process to the commissioner. The commissioner shall review
37 and approve such plans. The plan shall: (1) Be developed in consultation
38 with the local or regional school readiness council established pursuant
39 to section 10-16r; (2) be based on a needs and resource assessment; (3)
40 provide for the issuance of requests for proposals for providers of
41 accredited school readiness programs, provided, after the initial
42 requests for proposals, facilities that have been approved to operate a
43 child care program financed through the Connecticut Health and
44 Education Facilities Authority and have received a commitment for debt
45 service from the Department of Social Services, pursuant to section 17b-
46 749i, on or before June 30, 2014, and on or after July 1, 2014, from the
47 office, are exempt from the requirement for issuance of annual requests
48 for proposals; and (4) identify the need for funding pursuant to section
49 17b-749a in order to extend the hours and days of operation of school
50 readiness programs in order to provide child care services for children
51 attending such programs.

52 (d) (1) The commissioner shall establish a competitive grant program
53 to provide spaces in accredited school readiness programs or school
54 readiness programs seeking accreditation located in (A) an area served
55 by a priority school or a former priority school, (B) a town ranked one
56 to fifty when all towns are ranked in ascending order according to town
57 wealth, as defined in subdivision (26) of section 10-262f, whose school
58 district is not a priority school district pursuant to section 10-266p, (C) a
59 town formerly a town described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision,
60 as provided for in subdivision (2) of this subsection, or (D) a town
61 designated as an alliance district, as defined in section 10-262u, whose
62 school district is not a priority school district pursuant to section 10-
63 266p. A town in which a priority school is located, a regional school
64 readiness council, pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-16r, for a
65 region in which such a school is located or a town described in
66 subparagraph (B) of this subdivision may apply for such a grant in an
67 amount equal to the number of spaces in an accredited school readiness
68 program or a school readiness program seeking accreditation multiplied
69 by the per child cost set forth in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of
70 section 10-16q. Eligibility shall be determined for a three-year period
71 based on an applicant's designation as having a priority school or being
72 a town described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision for the initial
73 year of application. The state, acting by and in the discretion of the
74 Commissioner of Early Childhood, in consultation with a town or
75 regional school readiness council, may enter into a contract with a
76 municipality, local or regional board of education, regional educational
77 service center, family resource center, provider of a child care center,
78 group child care home or family child care home, as described in section
79 19a-77, Head Start program, preschool program or other program that
80 meets such standards established by the commissioner, to provide,
81 within available appropriations, state financial assistance. The chief
82 elected official of such town and the superintendent of schools of the
83 school district or the regional school readiness council shall submit a
84 plan, as described in subsection (c) of this section, for the expenditure of
85 such grant funds to the commissioner. In awarding grants pursuant to
86 this subsection, the commissioner shall give preference to applications

87 submitted by regional school readiness councils and may, within
88 available appropriations, provide a grant to such town or regional
89 school readiness council that increases the number of spaces for eligible
90 children who reside in an area or town described in subparagraphs (A)
91 to (D), inclusive, of this subdivision, in an accredited school readiness
92 program or a school readiness program seeking accreditation.

93 (2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (C) of this subdivision,
94 commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005, if a town received
95 a grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection and is no longer
96 eligible to receive such a grant, the town may receive a phase-out grant
97 for each of the three fiscal years following the fiscal year such town
98 received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

99 (B) The amount of such phase-out grants shall be determined as
100 follows: (i) For the first fiscal year following the fiscal year such town
101 received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in
102 an amount that does not exceed seventy-five per cent of the grant
103 amount such town received for the town or school's final year of
104 eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection; (ii) for the
105 second fiscal year following the fiscal year such town received its final
106 grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in an amount that
107 does not exceed fifty per cent of the grant amount such town received
108 for the town's or school's final year of eligibility pursuant to subdivision
109 (1) of this subsection; and (iii) for the third fiscal year following the fiscal
110 year such town received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of
111 this subsection, in an amount that does not exceed twenty-five per cent
112 of the grant amount such town received for the town's or school's final
113 year of eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

114 (C) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, and each fiscal year
115 thereafter, any town that received a grant pursuant to subparagraph (B)
116 of subdivision (1) of this subsection for the fiscal year ending June 30,
117 2010, shall continue to receive a grant under this subsection even if the
118 town no longer meets the criteria for such grant pursuant to
119 subparagraph (B) of subdivision (1) of this subsection.

120 (e) (1) If funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of this
121 section are not expended, the commissioner may deposit such
122 unexpended funds in the account established under section 10-16aa and
123 use such unexpended funds in accordance with the provisions of section
124 10-16aa.

125 (2) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, and each fiscal year
126 thereafter, if funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of
127 this section are not expended, an amount up to one million dollars of
128 such unexpended funds may be available for the provision of
129 professional development for early childhood care and education
130 program providers, and staff employed in such programs, provided
131 such programs accept state funds for infant, toddler and preschool slots.
132 Such unexpended funds may be available for use in accordance with the
133 provisions of this subparagraph for the subsequent fiscal year. The
134 commissioner may use such unexpended funds on and after July 1, 2015,
135 to support early childhood education programs accepting state funds in
136 satisfying the staff qualifications requirements of subparagraphs (B) and
137 (C) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section. The commissioner
138 shall use any such funds to provide assistance to individual staff
139 members, giving priority to those staff members (A) attending an
140 institution of higher education accredited by the Board of Regents for
141 Higher Education or the Office of Higher Education, and approved by
142 the Office of Early Childhood, and regionally accredited, at a maximum
143 of ten thousand dollars per staff member per year for the cost of higher
144 education courses leading to a bachelor's degree or, not later than
145 December 31, 2015, an associate degree, as such degrees are described
146 in said subparagraphs (B) and (C), or (B) receiving noncredit
147 competency-based training approved by the office, at a maximum of one
148 thousand dollars per staff member per year, provided such staff
149 members have applied for all available federal and state scholarships
150 and grants, and such assistance does not exceed such staff members'
151 financial need. Individual staff members shall apply for such
152 unexpended funds in a manner determined by the commissioner. The
153 commissioner shall determine how such unexpended funds shall be
154 distributed.

155 (3) If funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of this
156 section are not expended pursuant to subsection (c) of this section,
157 deposited pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, or used
158 pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection, the commissioner may
159 use such unexpended funds to support local school readiness programs.
160 The commissioner may use such funds for purposes including, but not
161 limited to, (A) assisting local school readiness programs in meeting and
162 maintaining accreditation requirements, (B) providing training in
163 implementing the preschool assessment and curriculum frameworks,
164 including training to enhance literacy teaching skills, (C) developing a
165 state-wide preschool curriculum, (D) developing student assessments
166 for students in grades kindergarten to two, inclusive, (E) developing
167 and implementing best practices for parents in supporting preschool
168 and kindergarten student learning, (F) developing and implementing
169 strategies for children to successfully transition to preschool and from
170 preschool to kindergarten, including through parental engagement and
171 whole-family supports that may be utilized through the two-
172 generational initiative, established pursuant to section 17b-112*l*, or
173 through other available resources, (G) providing for professional
174 development, including assisting in career ladder advancement, for
175 school readiness staff, (H) providing supplemental grants to other
176 towns that are eligible for grants pursuant to subsection (c) of this
177 section, and (I) developing a plan to provide spaces in an accredited
178 school readiness program or a school readiness program seeking
179 accreditation to all eligible children who reside in an area or town
180 described in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of subdivision (1) of
181 subsection (d) of this section.

182 (f) Any school readiness program that receives funds pursuant to this
183 section or section 10-16u shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color,
184 national origin, gender, religion or disability. For purposes of this
185 section, a nonsectarian program means any public or private school
186 readiness program that is not violative of the Establishment Clause of
187 the Constitution of the State of Connecticut or the Establishment Clause
188 of the Constitution of the United States of America.

189 (g) Subject to the provisions of this subsection, no funds received by
190 a town pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u
191 shall be used to supplant federal, state or local funding received by such
192 town for early childhood education, provided a town may use an
193 amount determined in accordance with this subsection for coordination,
194 program evaluation and administration. Such amount shall be at least
195 five per cent of the total grant allocation, but not more than seventy-five
196 thousand dollars and shall be determined by the commissioner based
197 on the school readiness grant award allocated to the town pursuant to
198 subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u and the number of
199 operating sites for coordination, program evaluation and
200 administration. Such amount shall be increased by an amount equal to
201 local funding provided for early childhood education coordination,
202 program evaluation and administration, not to exceed twenty-five
203 thousand dollars. Each town that receives a grant pursuant to
204 subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u shall designate a
205 person to be responsible for such coordination, program evaluation and
206 administration and to act as a liaison between the town and the
207 commissioner. Each school readiness program that receives funds
208 pursuant to this section or section 10-16u shall provide information to
209 the commissioner or the school readiness council, as requested, that is
210 necessary for purposes of any school readiness program evaluation.

211 (h) Any town receiving a grant pursuant to this section may use such
212 grant, with the approval of the commissioner, to prepare a facility or
213 staff for operating a school readiness program and shall be adjusted
214 based on the number of days of operation of a school readiness program
215 if a shorter term of operation is approved by the commissioner.

216 (i) A town may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible
217 children who reside in such town at an accredited school readiness
218 program located in another town. A regional school readiness council
219 may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible children who reside
220 in the region covered by the council at an accredited school readiness
221 program located outside such region.

222 (j) Children enrolled in school readiness programs funded pursuant
223 to this section shall not be counted (1) as resident students for purposes
224 of subdivision (22) of section 10-262f, or (2) in the determination of
225 average daily membership pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (a)
226 of section 10-261.

227 (k) (1) Up to two per cent of the amount of the appropriation for this
228 section may be allocated to the competitive grant program pursuant to
229 subsection (d) of this section. The determination of the amount of such
230 allocation shall be made on or before August first.

231 (2) Up to two per cent of the amount of the appropriation for this
232 section may be used by the commissioner in a manner consistent with
233 the provisions of section 10-509.

234 [(l) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, and each fiscal year
235 thereafter, any school readiness program that (1) is licensed by the
236 Office of Early Childhood pursuant to chapter 368a, (2) provides full-
237 day and year-round child care and education programs for children,
238 and (3) receives funds pursuant to this section or section 10-16u, shall
239 use any amount of the per child cost as described in subdivision (1) of
240 subsection (b) of section 10-16q that is over the amount of eight
241 thousand nine hundred twenty-seven dollars, exclusively to increase
242 the salaries of those individuals with direct responsibility for teaching
243 or caring for children in a classroom at such school readiness program.]

244 Sec. 3. Section 10-16t of the general statutes is repealed and the
245 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

246 A local school readiness council may elect to reserve up to five per
247 cent of the spaces in its school readiness programs for children who are
248 five years of age and are eligible to attend school pursuant to section 10-
249 15c. Such children shall only be eligible to participate in the school
250 readiness program if (1) they have been in the program for at least one
251 year, [and] (2) the parent or legal guardian of such a child, the school
252 readiness program provider and the local or regional school district in
253 which the child would otherwise be attending school agree that the

254 child [is not ready for kindergarten] would benefit from another year in
255 the program and to defer attendance in kindergarten until the following
256 year, and (3) a written authorization, signed by the parent or guardian
257 of such a child, indicating that such child will not attend kindergarten
258 until the following year is filed with the local or regional school district
259 in which such child would otherwise be attending school.

260 Sec. 4. Subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section 10-505 of the general
261 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof
262 (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

263 (3) "Eligible children" means children (A) [three and] from birth to
264 four years of age, inclusive, and children five years of age who are not
265 eligible to enroll in school pursuant to section 10-15c, or who are eligible
266 to enroll in school and will attend a school readiness program pursuant
267 to section 10-16t, as amended by this act, and (B) who reside (i) in an
268 area served by a priority school or a former priority school, as described
269 in subdivision (2) of subsection (d) of section 10-16p, as amended by this
270 act, (ii) in a town ranked one to fifty when all towns are ranked in
271 ascending order according to town wealth, as defined in subdivision
272 (26) of section 10-262f, whose school district is not a priority school
273 district pursuant to section 10-266p, (iii) in a town formerly a town
274 described in clause (ii) of this subparagraph, as provided for in
275 subdivision (2) of subsection (d) of section 10-16p, as amended by this
276 act, or (iv) in a town designated as an alliance district, as defined in
277 section 10-262u, whose school district is not a priority school district
278 pursuant to section 10-266p;

279 Sec. 5. Subsection (b) of section 8-210 of the general statutes is
280 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
281 *2023*):

282 (b) The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of
283 Early Childhood, may enter into a contract with a municipality, a group
284 child care home or family child care home, as described in section 19a-
285 77, a human resource development agency or a nonprofit corporation
286 for state financial assistance in developing and operating child care

287 centers, group child care homes and family child care homes for
288 children disadvantaged by reasons of economic, social or environmental
289 conditions, provided no such financial assistance shall be available for
290 the operating costs of any such child care center, group child care home
291 or family child care home unless it has been licensed by the
292 Commissioner of Early Childhood pursuant to section 19a-80. Such
293 financial assistance shall be available for a program of a municipality, of
294 a group child care home or family child care home, of a human resource
295 development agency or of a nonprofit corporation which may provide
296 for personnel, equipment, supplies, activities, program materials and
297 renovation and remodeling of the physical facilities of such child care
298 centers, group child care homes or family child care homes. Such
299 contract shall provide for state financial assistance, within available
300 appropriations, in the form of a state grant-in-aid (1) for a portion of the
301 cost of such program, as determined by the Commissioner of Early
302 Childhood, if not federally assisted, (2) equal to one-half of the amount
303 by which the net cost of such program, as approved by the
304 Commissioner of Early Childhood, exceeds the federal grant-in-aid
305 thereof, or (3) in an amount not less than (A) the per child cost as
306 described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q, for each
307 child in such program that is three or four years of age and each child
308 that is five years of age who is not eligible to enroll in school, pursuant
309 to section 10-15c, while maintaining services to children under three
310 years of age under this section, and (B) thirteen thousand five hundred
311 dollars for each child three years of age or under who is in infant or
312 toddler care and not in a preschool program. Any such contract entered
313 into on or after July 1, 2022, shall include a provision that at least sixty
314 per cent of the children enrolled in such child care center, group child
315 care home or family child care home are members of families [that] who
316 are at or below seventy-five per cent of the state median income. [For
317 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and each fiscal year thereafter, the
318 amount per child pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection that is
319 over the amount of the per child cost that was prescribed pursuant to
320 the contract under said subdivision (3) for the fiscal year ending June 30,
321 2023, shall be used exclusively to increase the salaries of early childhood

322 educators employed at the child care center.] The Commissioner of
323 Early Childhood may authorize child care centers, group child care
324 homes and family child care homes receiving financial assistance under
325 this subsection to apply a program surplus to the next program year.
326 The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall consult with directors of
327 child care centers in establishing fees for the operation of such centers.
328 For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, the Commissioner of Early
329 Childhood shall, within available appropriations, enter into contracts
330 under this section for the purpose of expanding the number of spaces
331 available to children three years of age or under who are in infant or
332 toddler care and not in a preschool program.

333 Sec. 6. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 10-506 of the general statutes
334 are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
335 *1, 2023*):

336 (a) For the fiscal [years] year ending June 30, 2015, [to June 30, 2024,
337 inclusive] and each fiscal year thereafter, the Office of Early Childhood,
338 in consultation with the Department of Education, shall design and
339 administer the Connecticut Smart Start competitive grant program to
340 provide grants to local and regional boards of education for capital and
341 operating expenses related to establishing or expanding a preschool
342 program under the jurisdiction of the board of education for the town.
343 A local or regional board of education may submit an application to the
344 office, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section,
345 and may receive (1) a grant for capital expenses in an amount not to
346 exceed seventy-five thousand dollars per classroom for costs related to
347 the renovation of an existing public school to accommodate the
348 establishment or expansion of a preschool program, and (2) an annual
349 grant for operating expenses (A) in an amount not to exceed five
350 thousand dollars per child served by such grant, or (B) in an amount not
351 to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars for each preschool classroom,
352 provided no town shall receive a total annual grant for operating
353 expenses greater than three hundred thousand dollars. Each local or
354 regional board of education that establishes or expands a preschool
355 program under this section shall be eligible to receive an annual grant

356 for operating expenses for a period of five years, provided such
357 preschool program meets standards established by the Commissioner
358 of Early Childhood. Such local or regional board of education may
359 submit an application for renewal of such grant to the office.

360 (b) On and after July 1, 2014, local and regional boards of education,
361 individually or cooperatively, pursuant to section 10-158a, may apply,
362 at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes, to the
363 office for a capital grant and an operating grant for the purposes
364 described in subsection (a) of this section. To be eligible to receive such
365 grants under this section, an applicant board of education shall (1)
366 demonstrate that it has a need for establishing or expanding a preschool
367 program using information requested by the commissioner on a form
368 prescribed by the commissioner, such as data collected from the
369 preschool experience survey, described in section 10-515, (2) submit a
370 plan for the expenditure of grant funds received under this section that
371 outlines how such board of education will use such funds to establish
372 or expand a preschool program, including, but not limited to, the
373 amount that such board will contribute to the operation of such
374 preschool program and how such board of education will provide
375 access to preschool for children who would not otherwise be able to
376 enroll in a preschool program, and (3) submit a letter of support for
377 establishing or expanding a preschool program by the local or regional
378 school readiness council, described in section 10-16r, if any, for the
379 school district. The commissioner shall give priority to boards of
380 education (A) that demonstrate the greatest need for the establishment
381 or expansion of a preschool program, and (B) whose plan allocates at
382 least sixty per cent of the spaces in such preschool program to children
383 who are members of families [that] who are at or below seventy-five per
384 cent of the state median income. [or fifty per cent of the spaces in such
385 preschool program to children who are eligible for free and reduced
386 price lunches.] The commissioner, in reviewing applications submitted
387 under this subsection, shall also take into consideration (i) whether an
388 applicant board of education (I) currently offers a full-day kindergarten
389 program, (II) will be cooperating and coordinating with other
390 governmental and community programs to provide services during

391 periods when the preschool program is not in session, or (III) will
392 collaborate with other boards of education, as part of a cooperative
393 arrangement pursuant to section 10-158a, to offer a regional preschool
394 program, and (ii) current community capacity for preschool programs
395 and current opportunities for preschool for children in the community.

396 Sec. 7. Subsection (b) of section 10-500 of the general statutes is
397 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
398 *2023*):

399 (b) The office shall be responsible for:

400 (1) Delivering services to young children and their families to ensure
401 optimal health, safety and learning for each young child, including, but
402 not limited to, coordinating agency efforts and data sharing in the two-
403 generational initiative established pursuant to section 17b-112l;

404 (2) Developing and implementing the early childhood information
405 system, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-501;

406 (3) Developing and reporting on the early childhood accountability
407 plan, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-503;

408 (4) Implementing a communications strategy for outreach to families,
409 service providers and policymakers;

410 (5) Beginning a state-wide longitudinal evaluation of the school
411 readiness program examining the educational progress of children from
412 prekindergarten programs to grade four, inclusive;

413 (6) Developing, coordinating and supporting public and private
414 partnerships to aid early childhood initiatives;

415 (7) Developing a state-wide developmentally appropriate
416 kindergarten entrance inventory that measures a child's level of
417 preparedness for kindergarten, but shall not be used as a measurement
418 tool for program accountability;

419 (8) Creating a unified set of reporting requirements for the purpose

420 of collecting the data elements necessary to perform quality assessments
421 and longitudinal analysis;

422 (9) Comparing and analyzing data collected pursuant to reporting
423 requirements created under subdivision (8) of this subsection with the
424 data collected in the state-wide public school information system,
425 pursuant to section 10-10a, for population-level analysis of children and
426 families;

427 (10) Continually monitoring and evaluating all early care and
428 education and child development programs and services, focusing on
429 program outcomes in satisfying the health, safety, developmental and
430 educational needs of all children;

431 (11) Coordinating home visitation services across programs for
432 young children;

433 (12) Providing information and technical assistance to persons
434 seeking early care and education and child development programs and
435 services;

436 (13) Assisting state agencies and municipalities in obtaining available
437 federal funding for early care and education and child development
438 programs and services;

439 (14) Providing technical assistance to providers of early care and
440 education programs and services to obtain licensing and improve
441 program quality;

442 (15) Establishing a quality rating and improvement system
443 developed by the office that covers home-based, center-based and
444 school-based early child care and learning;

445 (16) Maintaining an accreditation facilitation initiative to assist early
446 childhood care and education program and service providers in
447 achieving national standards and program improvement;

448 (17) Consulting with the Early Childhood Cabinet, established

449 pursuant to section 10-16z, and the Head Start advisory committee,
450 established pursuant to section 10-16n;

451 (18) Ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive state-wide system of
452 professional development for providers and staff of early care and
453 education and child development programs and services;

454 (19) Providing families with opportunities for choice in services
455 including quality child care and community-based family-centered
456 services;

457 (20) Integrating early childhood care and education and special
458 education services;

459 (21) Promoting universal access to early childhood care and
460 education;

461 (22) Ensuring nonduplication of monitoring and evaluation;

462 (23) Performing any other activities that will assist in the provision of
463 early care and education and child development programs and services;

464 (24) Developing early learning and development standards to be
465 used by early care and education providers;

466 (25) Developing and implementing a performance-based evaluation
467 system to evaluate licensed child care centers, in accordance with the
468 provisions of section 17b-749f; [and]

469 (26) Promoting the delivery of services to infants and toddlers to
470 ensure optimal health, safety and learning of children from birth to three
471 years of age; and

472 (27) Establishing a parent cabinet to advise the office on ways to
473 strengthen partnership and communication with families, bring
474 awareness to gaps and barriers to services, increase access to services for
475 families and help make improvements to the lives of young children and
476 families in the state.

477 Sec. 8. Section 10-502 of the general statutes is repealed and the
478 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

479 The Office of Early Childhood shall collaborate with and may, within
480 available appropriations, provide funding to local [and regional] early
481 childhood [councils] collaboratives for the implementation of early care
482 and education and child development programs at the local level. Such
483 local early childhood [councils] collaboratives shall: (1) Develop and
484 implement a comprehensive plan for an early childhood system for the
485 community served by such local early childhood [council] collaborative,
486 (2) develop policy and program planning, (3) encourage community
487 participation by emphasizing substantial parental involvement, (4)
488 collect, analyze and evaluate data with a focus on program and service
489 outcomes, (5) allocate resources, and (6) perform any other functions
490 that will assist in the provision of early childhood programs and
491 services. Such local early childhood [councils] collaboratives may enter
492 into memoranda of agreement with the local or regional school
493 readiness council, described in section 10-16r, of the town or region
494 served by such local early childhood [council] collaborative to perform
495 the duties and functions of a school readiness council, in accordance
496 with the provisions of section 10-16r, or if no such local or regional
497 school readiness council exists for the town or region of such local early
498 childhood [council] collaborative, perform the duties and functions of a
499 school readiness council, in accordance with the provisions of section
500 10-16r.

501 Sec. 9. Subsection (d) of section 19a-87a of the general statutes are
502 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
503 *2023*):

504 (d) Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child care
505 center or a group child care home is operating without a current and
506 valid license or in violation of regulations adopted under section 19a-79
507 or in a manner which may pose a potential danger to the health, welfare
508 and safety of a child receiving child care services, may report such
509 information to the Office of Early Childhood. The office shall investigate
510 any report or complaint received pursuant to this subsection. The name

511 of the person making the report or complaint shall not be disclosed
512 unless (1) such person consents to such disclosure, (2) a judicial or
513 administrative proceeding results therefrom, [or] (3) a license action
514 pursuant to subsection (a) of this section results therefrom, or (4) a state
515 or federal law enforcement officer, including, but not limited to, a
516 military law enforcement authority under the United States Department
517 of Defense, requests such information. All records obtained by the office
518 in connection with any such investigation shall not be subject to the
519 provisions of section 1-210 for a period of thirty days from the date of
520 the petition or other event initiating such investigation, or until such
521 time as the investigation is terminated pursuant to a withdrawal or
522 other informal disposition or until a hearing is convened pursuant to
523 chapter 54, whichever is earlier, except such records, whether obtained
524 or generated by the office, shall be disclosed, without redaction, to a
525 state or federal law enforcement officer, including, but not limited to, a
526 military law enforcement authority under the United States Department
527 of Defense upon written request. A formal statement of charges issued
528 by the office shall be subject to the provisions of section 1-210 from the
529 time that it is served or mailed to the respondent. Records which are
530 otherwise public records shall not be deemed confidential merely
531 because they have been obtained in connection with an investigation
532 under this section.

533 Sec. 10. Subsection (e) of section 19a-87e of the general statutes is
534 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
535 *2023*):

536 (e) Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a family child
537 care home, as defined in section 19a-77, is operating without a current
538 and valid license or in violation of the regulations adopted under section
539 19a-87b or in a manner which may pose a potential danger to the health,
540 welfare and safety of a child receiving child care services, may report
541 such information to the Office of Early Childhood. The office shall
542 investigate any report or complaint received pursuant to this subsection.
543 The name of the person making the report or complaint shall not be
544 disclosed unless (1) such person consents to such disclosure, (2) a

545 judicial or administrative proceeding results from such report or
546 complaint, [or] (3) a license action pursuant to subsection (a) of this
547 section results from such report or complaint, or (4) a state or federal
548 law enforcement officer, including, but not limited to, a military law
549 enforcement authority under the United States Department of Defense,
550 requests such information. All records obtained by the office in
551 connection with any such investigation shall not be subject to the
552 provisions of section 1-210 for a period of thirty days from the date of
553 the petition or other event initiating such investigation, or until such
554 time as the investigation is terminated pursuant to a withdrawal or
555 other informal disposition or until a hearing is convened pursuant to
556 chapter 54, whichever is earlier, except such records, whether obtained
557 or generated by the office, shall be disclosed, without redaction, to a
558 state or federal law enforcement officer, including, but not limited to, a
559 military law enforcement authority under the United States Department
560 of Defense, upon written request. A formal statement of charges issued
561 by the office shall be subject to the provisions of section 1-210 from the
562 time that it is served or mailed to the respondent. Records which are
563 otherwise public records shall not be deemed confidential merely
564 because they have been obtained in connection with an investigation
565 under this section.

566 Sec. 11. Section 19a-429 of the general statutes is repealed and the
567 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

568 Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a youth camp, as
569 defined in section 19a-420, is operating without a current and valid
570 license or in violation of regulations adopted under section 19a-428 or
571 in a manner which may pose a potential danger to the health, welfare
572 and safety of a child receiving youth camp services, may report such
573 information to the office. The office shall investigate any report or
574 complaint received pursuant to this section. In connection with any
575 investigation of a youth camp, the commissioner or the commissioner's
576 authorized agent may administer oaths, issue subpoenas, compel
577 testimony and order the production of books, records and documents.
578 If any person refuses to appear, to testify or to produce any book, record

579 or document when so ordered, a judge of the Superior Court may make
580 such order as may be appropriate to aid in the enforcement of this
581 section. The name of the person making the report or complaint shall
582 not be disclosed unless (1) such person consents to such disclosure, (2)
583 a judicial or administrative proceeding results therefrom, [or] (3) a
584 license action pursuant to section 19a-423 results from such report or
585 complaint, or (4) a state or federal law enforcement officer, including,
586 but not limited to, a military law enforcement authority under the
587 United States Department of Defense, requests such information. All
588 records obtained by the office in connection with any such investigation
589 shall not be subject to the provisions of section 1-210 for a period of
590 thirty days from the date of the petition or other event initiating such
591 investigation, or until such time as the investigation is terminated
592 pursuant to a withdrawal or other informal disposition or until a
593 hearing is convened pursuant to chapter 54, whichever is earlier, except
594 such records, whether obtained or generated by the office, shall be
595 disclosed, without redaction, to a state or federal law enforcement
596 officer, including, but not limited to, a military law enforcement
597 authority under the United States Department of Defense, upon written
598 request. A formal statement of charges issued by the office shall be
599 subject to the provisions of section 1-210 from the time that it is served
600 or mailed to the respondent. Records which are otherwise public
601 records shall not be deemed confidential merely because they have been
602 obtained in connection with an investigation under this section.

603 Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) The Office of Early
604 Childhood, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, shall
605 develop best practices for ordering a medical examination by a
606 physician, physician assistant or advanced practice registered nurse
607 during any investigation (1) concerning an application, reinstatement or
608 renewal of a license for a child care center, group child care home or
609 family child care home, as such terms are defined in section 19a-77 of
610 the general statutes, (2) of a complaint concerning child care services, as
611 described in section 19a-77 of the general statutes, or (3) concerning the
612 possible provision of unlicensed child care services. The best practices
613 shall include, but need not be limited to, specifications for (A) who

614 would be subject to a medical examination ordered by the office, (B)
 615 how the nature and scope of a medical examination would be
 616 determined, (C) how the physician, physician assistant or advanced
 617 practice registered nurse would be chosen to conduct a medical
 618 examination, and (D) the possible consequences and enforcement
 619 mechanisms for any failure to submit to a medical examination.

620 (b) Not later than February 1, 2024, the Office of Early Childhood
 621 shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the
 622 general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General
 623 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education a report
 624 concerning the best practices developed pursuant to subsection (a) of
 625 this section. Such report may include, but need not be limited to,
 626 legislative recommendations to authorize the office to order medical
 627 examinations in accordance with the best practices developed pursuant
 628 to subsection (a) of this section.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2023	10-16p(a)(2)
Sec. 2	July 1, 2023	10-16p(c) to (l)
Sec. 3	July 1, 2023	10-16t
Sec. 4	July 1, 2023	10-505(a)(3)
Sec. 5	July 1, 2023	8-210(b)
Sec. 6	July 1, 2023	10-506(a) and (b)
Sec. 7	July 1, 2023	10-500(b)
Sec. 8	July 1, 2023	10-502
Sec. 9	July 1, 2023	19a-87a(d)
Sec. 10	July 1, 2023	19a-87e(e)
Sec. 11	July 1, 2023	19a-429
Sec. 12	July 1, 2023	New section

ED Joint Favorable Subst.

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 24 \$	FY 25 \$
Office of Early Childhood	GF - See Below	See Below	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 24 \$	FY 25 \$
Various Municipalities	See Below	See Below	See Below

Explanation

The bill results in a cost of to the General Fund of at least \$250,000 in FY 24 and FY 25 to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to create a parent cabinet, including hiring one full-time employee to provide administrative assistance to meet the requirements of the bill.

The bill precludes future savings to OEC to the extent that the eligibility expansion for the School Readiness program results in the expenditure of funds that would have otherwise lapsed. Town-based providers would experience a corresponding revenue impact associated with the change in their School Readiness grant, based on the number of children being served.

The bill also precludes future savings to OEC by eliminating the sunset date of the Smart Start program. By making the program permanent, OEC may incur future costs it otherwise would not have had the program ended, while towns will experience a corresponding revenue impact. The bill also potentially changes the distribution of

Smart Start funding to towns by eliminating the option to give priority to plans that allocate spaces for children who are eligible for free and reduced price lunches.

The bill also changes school readiness grant awards from annual to biennial. While this does not change the total amount of funds expended, it may alter the distribution of funds resulting in a revenue impact to town-based providers

The bill makes technical, conforming, and other changes that have no fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 6686*****AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.*****SUMMARY**

This bill lowers the eligibility age of children for the Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) School Readiness preschool program. Under current law, eligible children are those ages three or four, and children age five who are not eligible to enroll in school (by law a child must reach age five before January of the school year to attend school that year). The bill lowers entry age to birth (§ 1). It also modifies the current requirements for a school-eligible five-year-old to stay in a school readiness program (§ 3).

By law, School Readiness is a nonreligious, state-funded program that (1) meets state standards, (2) provides at least 450 hours and 180 days of developmentally appropriate learning per year, and (3) is open to age-eligible children.

The bill also does the following:

1. (a) removes a requirement that School Readiness and other child care program grants that exceed a per-child threshold be used for teacher salaries, and (b) changes the grant frequency from annual to biennial (§§ 2 & 4-5);
2. removes the sunset date for the smart start competitive grant and changes the requirements for grant applications to receive priority consideration (§ 6);

3. requires OEC to create a parent advisory cabinet (§ 7);
4. changes the name of early childhood “councils” to “collaboratives” (§ 8);
5. requires OEC to disclose the complainant’s name and investigation records related to child care facility licensure complaints, upon request, to state and federal law enforcement (§§ 9 & 11); and
6. requires OEC to develop best practices for when OEC can order a medical exam related to a license matter or complaint investigation (§ 12).

It also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§§ 2 & 5 — SCHOOL READINESS AND CHILD CARE GRANTS

Excess Grant Award Flexibility

Under current law, state-licensed school readiness programs that operate full-day, year-round programs and receive school readiness per-pupil state grants must 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.

Current law also has a similar excess-funds salary provision for state-contracted child care facilities that was set to begin with FY 24. This applies to child care facilities’ contracts with the state for a grant for (1) an amount at least equal to the per-child cost set in state law for each child ages three to five, and not yet eligible to enroll in school, and (2) a \$13,500 per-child grant for children ages three and younger who are in toddler or infant care and not in a preschool program. The amount per child that is over the amount of the per-child cost stated in the FY 23 contract must be used exclusively to increase salaries of early childhood educators employed at these child care facilities.

The bill repeals both of these excess-funds salary provisions.

Biennial Grant Award

The bill also changes school readiness grants for priority school districts from an annual to a biennial award beginning in FY 23. As under current law, awards depend on available funding and a satisfactory annual evaluation.

§ 3 — SCHOOL READINESS AND FIVE-YEAR-OLDS

Current law allows a five-year-old to stay in a school readiness program if the child has been in the program for at least one year and the parent or guardian, the school board of the district where the child would be attending school, and the school readiness provider agree the child is not ready for kindergarten. The bill additionally requires that the parent or guardian sign a written authorization stating that the child will not attend kindergarten until the following year, and file it with the school district. The bill also replaces “not ready for kindergarten” with “would benefit from another year in the program,” presumably expanding eligibility.

§ 6 — SMART START COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM

The bill removes the FY 24 sunset date (i.e., June 30, 2014) for the smart start competitive grant to provide funds for capital and operating expenses for school districts to expand or establish preschool programs. The bill makes the program permanent with no end date.

Under current law, the OEC commissioner must prioritize school boards (1) that demonstrate the greatest need to establish or expand a preschool program and (2) whose plan allocates (a) at least 60% of the spaces in the preschool program to children who are members of families at or below 75% of the state median income or (b) 50% of the spaces to children who are eligible for free and reduced price lunches (FRPL). The bill eliminates the option for the commissioner to give priority to boards that reserve spaces for FRPL-eligible children.

§ 7 — PARENT ADVISORY CABINET

The bill expands OEC's statutory duties to include establishing a parent advisory cabinet. The cabinet must advise OEC on ways to:

1. strengthen partnership and communication with families,
2. bring awareness to gaps and barriers to services,
3. increase access to services for families, and
4. help improve the lives of young children and families in the state.

§ 8 — EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS

The bill changes the name of early childhood "councils" to "collaboratives." Under current law, these councils are local or regional. The bill eliminates references to regional councils, which in practice do not exist. OEC collaborates with the councils to implement early care and education and child development programs at the local level.

§§ 9-11 — LICENSURE VIOLATION COMPLAINTS

The bill requires OEC to share the complainant's identity and certain records related to complaints about licensure violations with state and federal law enforcement officers, including a military law enforcement authority under the U.S. Department of Defense, upon a written request. It applies to licensing complaints against child care centers, group child care homes, family child care homes, and youth camps.

Under current law, the name of the person making the report or complaint cannot be disclosed unless (1) the person consents or (2) a judicial or administrative proceeding or a license action results from the complaint. Also under current law, records OEC obtains in connection with an investigation are exempt from Freedom of Information Act disclosure (1) for 30 days after the date of the petition or other event causing the investigation; (2) until the investigation is terminated; or (3) a hearing is convened, whichever is earlier. The bill requires the records, whether obtained or generated by OEC, to be disclosed without redaction.

§ 12 — BEST PRACTICES FOR OEC-ORDERED MEDICAL EXAMS

The bill requires OEC, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, to develop best practices for a physician, physician’s assistant (PA), or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) ordering a medical examination during an investigation over:

1. an application, reinstatement, or renewal of a license for a child care center, group child care home, or family child care home;
2. a complaint about child care services, which includes child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes; or
3. child care from an unlicensed provider.

The best practices must at least include:

1. who would be subject to an OEC-ordered medical examination;
2. how the examination’s nature and scope would be determined;
3. how the physician, PA, or APRN would be chosen to conduct the examination; and
4. the possible consequences and enforcement mechanisms for any failure to submit to an examination.

The bill requires OEC to submit a report on the best practices, including any legislative recommendations, to the Education Committee by February 1, 2024.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
 Yea 41 Nay 0 (03/17/2023)