



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Raised Bill No. 137

LCO No. 1182



Referred to Committee on EDUCATION

Introduced by:
(ED)

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. Subsection (a) of section 10-16z of the 2026 supplement to
2 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
3 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

4 (a) There is established the Early Childhood Cabinet. The cabinet
5 shall consist of: (1) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the
6 commissioner's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Education, or the
7 commissioner's designee, (3) the Commissioner of Social Services, or the
8 commissioner's designee, (4) the chancellor of the Connecticut State
9 Colleges and Universities, or the chancellor's designee, (5) the
10 Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee, (6) the
11 Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's
12 designee, (7) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the
13 commissioner's designee, (8) the executive director of the Commission
14 on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity or the executive
15 director's designee, (9) the project director of the Connecticut Head Start

16 State Collaboration Office, (10) a parent or guardian of a child who
17 attends or attended a school readiness program appointed by the
18 minority leader of the House of Representatives, (11) a representative of
19 a local provider of early childhood education appointed by the minority
20 leader of the Senate, (12) a representative of the Connecticut Family
21 Resource Center Alliance appointed by the majority leader of the House
22 of Representatives, (13) a representative of a state-funded child care
23 center appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (14) two
24 appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom
25 is a member of a board of education for a town designated as an alliance
26 district, as defined in section 10-262u, and one of whom is a parent who
27 has a child attending a school in an educational reform district, as
28 defined in section 10-262u, (15) two appointed by the president pro
29 tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of an association
30 of early education and child care providers and one of whom is a
31 representative of a public elementary school with a prekindergarten
32 program, (16) ~~ten~~ eleven appointed by the Governor, one of whom is
33 a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association, one of
34 whom is a representative of the business community in this state, one of
35 whom is a representative of the philanthropic community in this state,
36 one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut State Employees
37 Association, one of whom is an administrator of the child care
38 development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development
39 Block Grant Act of 1990, one of whom is responsible for administering
40 grants received under Section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with
41 Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1419, as amended from time to time,
42 one of whom is responsible for administering the provisions of Title I of
43 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC 6301 et seq., one
44 of whom is responsible for coordinating education services to children
45 and youth who are homeless, one of whom is a licensed family child
46 care home provider and a member of a staffed family child care network
47 identified by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, ~~and~~ one of whom
48 is a parent recommended by a parent advisory group that has been
49 appointed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, and a physician

50 licensed pursuant to chapter 370, who is a pediatrician, (17) the
51 Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's
52 designee, (18) the Lieutenant Governor, or the Lieutenant Governor's
53 designee, (19) the Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's
54 designee, (20) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction
55 Services, or the commissioner's designee, and (21) the executive director
56 of the Connecticut Library Consortium, or a cooperating library service
57 unit as defined in section 11-9e, or the executive director's designee.

58 Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 10-506 of the general statutes is
59 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
60 *2026*):

61 (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year
62 thereafter, the Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with the
63 Department of Education, shall design and administer the Connecticut
64 Smart Start competitive grant program to provide grants to local and
65 regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related
66 to establishing or expanding a preschool program under the jurisdiction
67 of the board of education for the town. A local or regional board of
68 education may submit an application to the office, in accordance with
69 the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, and may receive (1) a
70 grant for capital expenses in an amount not to exceed seventy-five
71 thousand dollars per classroom for costs related to the renovation of an
72 existing public school to accommodate the establishment or expansion
73 of a preschool program, and (2) an annual grant for operating expenses
74 (A) in an amount not to exceed [~~five~~] six thousand five hundred dollars
75 per child served by such grant, or (B) in an amount not to exceed
76 [~~seventy-five~~] ninety-seven thousand five hundred dollars for each
77 preschool classroom. Each local or regional board of education that
78 establishes or expands a preschool program under this section shall be
79 eligible to receive an annual grant for operating expenses for a period of
80 five years, provided such preschool program meets standards
81 established by the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such local or
82 regional board of education may submit an application for renewal of

83 such grant to the office.

84 Sec. 3. Subdivision (3) of section 19a-420 of the 2026 supplement to
85 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
86 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

87 (3) "Day camp" means any youth camp which is established,
88 conducted or maintained during daylight hours for [at least] (A) three
89 or more hours per day for three days a week with the campers [eating
90 and] sleeping at home, [except for one meal per day] or (B) more than
91 one session per day for two or more hours per session if children are
92 permitted to enroll in more than one session per day, but does not
93 include programs operated by a municipal agency;

94 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) For purposes of this
95 section, "licensee" means any person licensed pursuant to section 19a-
96 421 of the general statutes and "youth camp" has the same meaning as
97 provided in section 19a-420 of the general statutes, as amended by this
98 act.

99 (b) Each licensee shall provide written contact information for the
100 licensee's youth camp, including the name, address and telephone
101 number of the youth camp, to the Office of Early Childhood. Each
102 licensee shall verify and update, as appropriate, such contact
103 information.

104 (c) The Office of Early Childhood shall share, in accordance with a
105 memorandum of understanding or other agreement, any information
106 collected pursuant to subsection (b) of this section with the Department
107 of Emergency Services and Public Protection for use in an emergency
108 notification system, as defined in section 28-25 of the general statutes,
109 that notifies licensees of an emergency situation in the vicinity of a youth
110 camp that may endanger the safety or welfare of the children at such
111 youth camp. Such emergency situation may include, but need not be
112 limited to, a fire, a criminal act, an emergency or an act of nature such
113 as an earthquake, a tornado, a hurricane or a storm.

114 Sec. 5. Subsection (a) of section 19a-87e of the general statutes is
115 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
116 *2026*):

117 (a) The Commissioner of Early Childhood may (1) refuse to license
118 under section 19a-87b, a person to own, conduct, operate or maintain a
119 family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, (2) refuse to
120 approve under section 19a-87b, a person to act as an assistant or
121 substitute staff member in a family child care home, as defined in section
122 19a-77, or (3) suspend or revoke the license or approval or take any other
123 action that may be set forth in regulation that may be adopted pursuant
124 to section 19a-79 if the person who owns, conducts, maintains or
125 operates the family child care home, the person who acts as an assistant
126 or substitute staff member in a family child care home, a person
127 employed in such family child care home in a position connected with
128 the provision of care to a child receiving child care services or a
129 household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, who
130 is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older and resides therein, has been
131 convicted, in this state or any other state of a felony, as defined in section
132 53a-25, involving the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical
133 force against another person, or has a criminal record in this state or any
134 other state that the commissioner reasonably believes renders the
135 person unsuitable to own, conduct, operate or maintain or be employed
136 by a family child care home, or act as an assistant or substitute staff
137 member in a family child care home, or if such persons or a household
138 member has been convicted in this state or any other state of cruelty to
139 persons under section 53-20, injury or risk of injury to or impairing
140 morals of children under section 53-21, abandonment of children under
141 the age of six years under section 53-23, or any felony where the victim
142 of the felony is a child under eighteen years of age, a violation of section
143 53a-70b of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1,
144 2019, or section 53a-70, 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a,
145 illegal manufacture, distribution, sale, prescription, dispensing or
146 administration under section 21a-277 or 21a-278, or illegal possession

147 under section 21a-279, or if such person, a person who acts as assistant
148 or substitute staff member in a family child care home or a person
149 employed in such family child care home in a position connected with
150 the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, either fails
151 to substantially comply with the regulations adopted pursuant to
152 section 19a-87b, or conducts, operates or maintains the home in a
153 manner which endangers the health, safety and welfare of the children
154 receiving child care services. Any refusal of a license or approval
155 pursuant to this section shall be rendered in accordance with the
156 provisions of sections 46a-79 to 46a-81, inclusive. Any person whose
157 license or approval has been revoked pursuant to this section shall be
158 ineligible to apply for a license or approval for a period of one year from
159 the effective date of revocation.

160 Sec. 6. Section 10-530 of the general statutes is repealed and the
161 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

162 (a) As used in this section:

163 (1) "Child care facility" means a "child care center", "group child care
164 home" or "family child care home" that provides "child care services",
165 each as described in section 19a-77, or any provider of child care services
166 under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section
167 17b-749;

168 (2) "Child care services provider or staff member" means any person
169 who is (A) a licensee, employee, volunteer, [or alternate] staff, program
170 staff, assistant, substitute staff member or household member of a child
171 care facility, (B) a family child care provider, or (C) [any other] a person
172 who provides child care services under the child care subsidy program
173 established pursuant to section 17b-749 but does not include a person
174 who is providing child care services under the child care subsidy
175 program (i) exclusively to children with whom such person is related,
176 and (ii) without being issued a license to provide child care services by
177 the Office of Early Childhood; [and]

178 (3) "Family child care provider" means any person who provides
179 child care services under the child care subsidy program established
180 pursuant to section 17b-749 (A) in a family child care home, as defined
181 in section 19a-77, or (B) in a home not requiring a license pursuant to
182 subdivision (4) of subsection (b) of section 19a-77;

183 (4) "Licensee" means any person licensed under section 19a-80 or 19a-
184 87b to provide child care services;

185 (5) "Employee" means any person paid to work for a family child care
186 provider as a substitute staff member or assistant or as staff or program
187 staff in a child care center or group child care home;

188 (6) "Volunteer" means any person who is not an employee of a child
189 care center or group child care home and whose activities involve the
190 direct care of children or the opportunity for unsupervised access to
191 children;

192 (7) "Staff" means any person employed by a child care center or group
193 child care home, sixteen years of age or older, who is not responsible for
194 providing direct care of children or does not have unsupervised access
195 to children;

196 (8) "Program staff" means any person employed by a child care center
197 or group child care home, sixteen years of age or older, responsible for
198 the direct care of children;

199 (9) "Assistant" means any person who has been approved pursuant
200 to section 19a-87b to provide child care services in a family child care
201 home;

202 (10) "Substitute staff member" means any person who has been
203 approved pursuant to section 19a-87b to provide child care services in a
204 family child care home; and

205 (11) "Household member" means any person, other than the licensee,
206 who is eighteen years of age or older and resides in the family child care

207 home.

208 (b) The comprehensive background checks required pursuant to
209 subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b and
210 subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, shall be conducted at least once every
211 five years for each child care services provider or staff member [in
212 accordance with the provisions of 45 CFR 98.43, as amended from time
213 to time] and shall include a national and state criminal history records
214 check conducted in accordance with section 29-17a, a check of the state
215 and national sex offender registries, a check of the state child abuse or
216 neglect registry maintained by the Department of Children and Families
217 pursuant to section 17a-101k, and a check of the child abuse or neglect
218 registry for any other state in which such child care services provider or
219 staff member resided in the previous five years.

220 (c) Any person who applies for a position at a child care facility in the
221 state shall not be required to submit to such comprehensive background
222 checks if such person (1) is an employee of a child care facility in the
223 state, or has not been separated from employment as a child care
224 services provider or staff member in the state for a period of more than
225 one hundred eighty days, and (2) has successfully completed such
226 comprehensive background checks in the previous five years. Nothing
227 in this section prohibits the Commissioner of Early Childhood from
228 requiring that a person applying for a position as a child care services
229 provider or staff member submit to comprehensive background checks
230 more than once during a five-year period.

231 (d) Any person required to submit to comprehensive background
232 checks pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of
233 section 19a-87b and subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, may submit a
234 request, in writing, to the Commissioner of Early Childhood for a
235 waiver of the requirement to submit fingerprints. Such request shall
236 include such person's name and date of birth, and evidence that such
237 person is unable to satisfy such fingerprints requirement due to a
238 medical condition, including, but not limited to, a birth defect, physical

239 deformity, skin condition or psychiatric condition. Upon the granting of
240 a waiver to a person under this subsection, the Office of Early Childhood
241 shall conduct a state criminal history records check of such person by
242 using the name and date of birth that was provided in the request for a
243 waiver by such person.

244 Sec. 7. Subsection (b) of section 19a-87a of the general statutes is
245 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
246 *2026*):

247 (b) Any person who is licensed to conduct, operate or maintain a
248 child care center or group child care home shall notify the commissioner
249 of any criminal conviction or placement on the child abuse and neglect
250 registry, established pursuant to section 17a-101k, of the owner,
251 conductor, operator or maintainer of the center or home or of any person
252 employed therein in a position connected with the provision of care to
253 a child receiving child care services, immediately upon obtaining
254 knowledge of the conviction or placement on the registry. Failure to
255 comply with the notification requirement may result in the suspension
256 or revocation of the license or the imposition of any action set forth in
257 regulation, and shall subject the licensed person to a civil penalty of not
258 more than one hundred dollars per day for each day after the person
259 obtained knowledge of the conviction or placement on the registry.

260 Sec. 8. Subsection (c) of section 19a-87e of the general statutes is
261 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
262 *2026*):

263 (c) Any person who applies or is licensed to conduct, operate or
264 maintain a family child care home or approved to act as an assistant or
265 substitute staff member in a family child care home shall notify the
266 commissioner of any conviction or placement on the child abuse and
267 neglect registry, established pursuant to section 17a-101k, of the owner,
268 conductor, operator or maintainer of the family child care home or of
269 any household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b,

270 who is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older, or any person employed
 271 in such family child care home in a position connected with the
 272 provision of care to a child receiving child care services, [of a crime
 273 which affects the commissioner's discretion under subsection (a) of this
 274 section,] immediately upon obtaining knowledge of such conviction or
 275 placement on the registry. Failure to comply with the notification
 276 requirement of this subsection may result in the suspension or
 277 revocation of the license or approval or the taking of any other action
 278 against a license or approval set forth in regulation adopted pursuant to
 279 section 19a-79 and shall subject the licensee or approved staff member
 280 to a civil penalty of not more than one hundred dollars per day for each
 281 day after the person obtained knowledge of the conviction or placement
 282 on the registry.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-16z(a)
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-506(a)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-420(3)
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-87e(a)
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-530
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-87a(b)
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-87e(c)

Statement of Purpose:

To implement the recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]