

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-39—sHB 5562
Education Committee
Appropriations Committee

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD,
EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND CONCERNING DYSLEXIA AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION**

SUMMARY: This act creates the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and designates it as the lead agency for the early care and education of young children. Previously, this office existed under the 2013 budget act (PA 13-184) and Executive Order No. 35 (June 24, 2013). The act creates the office in statute with all the powers and authority of a state department.

The act makes OEC responsible for administering the early childhood programs previously administered by the departments of Education (SDE), Social Services (DSS), and Public Health (DPH), including:

1. school readiness;
2. the Children's Trust Fund;
3. Connecticut Charts-a-Course;
4. state and federally funded child day care subsidies;
5. child day care services management, evaluation, and professional development;
6. child day care facilities licensing and inspection; and
7. youth camp oversight.

For some programs, the act designates OEC as the lead agency, entirely replacing the prior administrative agency; for others, OEC must consult with the prior administrative agency before taking action. It also reassigns various funds, grants, and loans to OEC oversight.

The act makes several changes to school readiness program funding, which the state provides through various grants that allow towns to purchase seats for three- to five-year olds who are too young to attend kindergarten (see BACKGROUND). It expands the school readiness program by requiring OEC to expand the competitive grant for school readiness spaces under existing law and create a new school readiness grant to enable eligible towns and regional school readiness councils to (1) start new school readiness classrooms and (2) provide spaces to eligible children in school readiness programs that are accredited or seeking accreditation.

It also makes a number of additional substantive changes. Among other things, the act:

1. requires OEC to make more frequent unannounced visits to all licensed day care centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes;

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- 2. makes changes to the school readiness staff qualification law;
- 3. makes all DPH employees mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect;
- 4. eliminates DSS’s authority to accept gifts and donations; and
- 5. changes the organization and membership of certain councils, committees, and cabinets.

The act creates the position of OEC commissioner, who directs the office and serves at the pleasure of the governor. It eliminates the coordinated system of early care and education and child development (“coordinated system”) and the position of planning director, precursors to OEC and its commissioner, and incorporates the coordinated system’s goals and duties into enumerated OEC duties (see BACKGROUND).

The act also requires that (1) dyslexia be added to the special education individualized education program (IEP) form as a separate category and (2) instruction in dyslexia be added to teacher preparation programs that lead to professional teacher certification. It requires boards of education to notify parents or guardians of preschool special education students who reach age five or six of their legal right to hold the child back from entering kindergarten for a year.

The act also makes many minor, conforming, and technical changes and deletes several obsolete deadlines and statutes.

EFFECTIVE DATES: July 1, 2014, except for sections relating to OEC organization, leadership, and responsibilities (§§ 4-6); the early childhood information system (§ 7); the early childhood accountability plan (§ 8); OEC financial support for Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) day care center loan recipients (§ 68); Teachers Retirement System (TRS) changes for OEC employees (§§ 71-73); the preschool experience survey creation (§ 86); and adding dyslexia to the IEP form (§ 1) and notification of parental rights (§ 3), which are effective upon passage.

§§ 4 & 5 — OFFICE ORGANIZATION, LEADERSHIP, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The act designates OEC as the successor department to SDE, DSS, and DPH for the administration of certain programs, funds, and cabinets detailed in subsequent sections. The office is led by a commissioner, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature. The act places OEC in SDE for administrative purposes only.

The act shifts to OEC most of the tasks prior law gave to the coordinated system and the planning director. Table 1 lists OEC responsibilities and shows which ones existed under prior law and which are new under the act. The act allows OEC to enter into memoranda of agreement (MOAs) with, and accept donations from, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations to accomplish these duties.

Table 1: OEC Responsibilities

Services
<i>New Responsibilities Under the Act</i>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating home visitation services across programs for young children
<i>Transferred Responsibilities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering services to children and their families • Providing information and technical assistance to individuals seeking programs and services • Assisting state agencies and municipalities in obtaining federal funding for programs and services • Providing technical assistance to program and service providers in obtaining licensing and improving program quality • Maintaining an accreditation initiative to assist program and service providers in achieving national standards and program improvement • Providing families with choice in services, including quality child care and community-based, family-centered services • Performing any other activities that will assist in providing early care and education and child development programs and services • Integrating early childhood care and education and special education services
Systems and Plans
<i>New Responsibilities Under the Act</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing an early childhood information system • Developing and reporting on the early childhood accountability plan the act establishes
<i>Transferred Responsibilities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a quality rating and improvement system that covers home-based, center-based, and school-based early child care and learning • Ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive statewide professional development system for program and service providers and staff • Developing early learning and development standards for early care and education providers to use
Evaluation
<i>New Responsibilities Under the Act</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By September 1, 2014, beginning a statewide longitudinal evaluation of school readiness programs to examine children's educational progress from preschool through grade four • Developing and implementing a performance-based evaluation system to evaluate licensed child day care centers
<i>Transferred Responsibilities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing a statewide, developmentally appropriate assessment tool that measures kindergarten preparedness (this cannot be used to measure program accountability) • Monitoring and evaluating all early care and education and child development programs and services, focusing

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on program outcomes while retaining distinct separation between quality improvement services and child day care licensing services
Data Collection
<i>New Responsibilities Under the Act</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a unified set of reporting requirements to collect data for quality assessments and longitudinal analysis • Comparing and analyzing such data with the data collected in the statewide public school information system (PSIS) (see BACKGROUND) for population-level analysis of children and families
Communication
<i>New Responsibilities Under the Act</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a communications strategy for outreach to families, service providers, and policymakers
<i>Transferred Responsibilities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting universal access to early childhood care and education
Collaboration
<i>Transferred Responsibilities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing, coordinating, and supporting public and private partnerships to aid early childhood initiatives • Consulting with the Early Childhood Cabinet and the Head Start Advisory Committee • Ensuring non-duplication of monitoring and evaluation (does not specify whether this pertains to programs/services or providers/staff)

§ 6 — EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS

The act requires OEC, rather than the coordinated system, to work with local and regional early childhood education councils to implement local early childhood programs. By law, these councils must, among other things, plan policies and programs, encourage parental involvement, and perform other functions that help early childhood programs and services.

§ 7 — EARLY CHILDHOOD INFORMATION SYSTEM

The act requires OEC to develop and implement an early childhood information system for data-sharing among early childhood service providers. The information system must track, in a manner similar to PSIS, the health, safety, and school readiness of all young children receiving early care and education services from any (1) public school board, (2) school readiness program, or (3) publicly funded program. The system must also track (1) the characteristics of (a) such programs and (b) the existing and potential workforce serving these children and (2) the data collected, if any, from the preschool experience survey.

The act also requires local and regional school boards, school readiness programs receiving public funding, and child day care centers licensed by DPH or OEC to enter the information on all children and staff into the early childhood

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information system.

§ 8 — EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

The act requires OEC to develop, in consultation with the Early Childhood Cabinet, an early childhood accountability plan by December 31, 2015. The plan must:

1. identify and define population indicators and program and system performance measures of the health, safety, and readiness of children to enter kindergarten;
2. identify and define early school success of children;
3. identify any new or improved data for these purposes; and
4. include aggregate information on characteristics of children and programs tracked by the early childhood information system, including family income, receipt of public assistance, if any, and residential communities.

Aggregate child and program data used in the plan must be organized using a performance measurement accountability framework. OEC must use the kindergarten readiness indicators and performance measures to develop annual report cards on the results of the early childhood accountability plan by July 1, 2015. OEC must submit the plan by January 15, 2016 to the Education and Appropriations committees and annually report to these committees on the plan results and report cards.

§§ 9 & 65 — KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE AGE

The act requires OEC, in consultation with SDE, to develop a plan for:

1. changing the date, from January 1 to October 1 of any school year, by which a child must reach age five in order to be eligible for kindergarten enrollment and
2. creating school readiness programs and public and private pre-kindergarten spaces for those children who do not turn age five by October 1 of any school year and are ineligible for kindergarten enrollment.

The act eliminates prior law's requirement that the Achievement Gap Task Force perform this function. OEC must submit the plan to the Education Committee by June 30, 2015.

§§ 13-14 & 17 — SDE PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED TO OEC

The act transfers, from SDE to OEC, oversight of the school readiness program, which provides funding to increase the number of full-day, full-year spaces in accredited programs for children ages three to five who are not old enough to enroll in public school. Under the act, the programs' content remains generally the same, except as noted below.

Under prior law, the programs used standards that the State Board of Education (SBE) established. The act instead requires them to follow early learning and development standards developed by OEC. OEC must, within available appropriations, train and assist early childhood providers in implementing the standards.

The act allows OEC, as SDE did under prior law, to retain up to \$198,200 in

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each of the next two fiscal years (FY 15 and 16) for program coordination, evaluation, and administration.

The act eliminates the requirement that school readiness programs use annual evaluation assessment measures SDE and DSS developed through an interagency agreement on the coordinated system of early care and education and child development.

DSS PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED TO OEC

§§ 25-28, 30-31, 35-37, 41-43, & 66— Child Day Care Services Lead Agency Duties

The act makes OEC the lead agency for child day care. As lead agency, OEC must, among other things:

1. inventory available day care services and funding sources;
2. train day care providers;
3. develop a coordinated professional development system;
4. adopt regulations for child day care services;
5. establish a performance-based evaluation system for licensed day care centers; and
6. within available appropriations, conduct a longitudinal study of the progress of children and their families during and after day care program participation.

OEC must report to the General Assembly (1) by January 1, 2015 on the implementation of the evaluation system and the longitudinal study and (2) annually thereafter on cumulative evaluation results.

The act eliminates the lead agency's duty to deliver ongoing training to child day care providers via videotaped workshops for broadcast on public access cable.

§ 25 — Connecticut Charts-a-Course

The act eliminates the requirement that DSS develop and implement a statewide coordinated training and professional development system for child day care and early childhood education providers and staff, commonly known as Connecticut Charts-a-Course. It instead directs OEC to develop Connecticut Charts-a-Course with the Early Childhood Cabinet.

§§ 32 & 41-43 — Federal and State Child Day Care Subsidies — Care 4 Kids

The act moves Care 4 Kids, which is partially funded by the federal Child Care Development Fund, to OEC. It requires the OEC commissioner to consult with the DSS commissioner to establish Care 4 Kids eligibility and program standards.

Beginning July 1, 2014, the act allows the OEC commissioner to make Care 4 Kids eligibility redeterminations on a six-month basis if, because of using an eight-month period, Care 4 Kids overpayments increased in comparison with the overpayments during the period between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2010. Under prior law, the DSS commissioner had this authority.

The act also requires the OEC commissioner, by July 1, 2014 and annually

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thereafter, to report to the Human Services and Appropriations committees on Care 4 Kids eligibility redeterminations made on an eight-month basis. The report must analyze OEC's (1) overpayments of Care 4 Kids benefits and (2) administrative costs incurred as a result of eligibility redeterminations made on an eight-month basis.

The act makes a number of conforming changes to transfer other authority to the OEC commissioner regarding (1) health and safety standards for Care 4 Kids and (2) criminal history records checks for day care providers.

§ 66 — Care 4 Kids Statewide Fraud Early Detection

By law, the DSS commissioner is charged with developing a statewide fraud early detection system to investigate potentially fraudulent applications for social service programs including the Temporary Family Assistance Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, and Care 4 Kids. The act requires the DSS commissioner to consult with the OEC commissioner when developing the Care 4 Kids statewide fraud detection system.

§§ 44-46 — Children's Trust Fund

By law, the Children's Trust Fund supports (1) programs aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect and (2) family resource programs. The act transfers authority over the trust fund and related reporting requirements from DSS to OEC. It also assigns administration of the trust fund's abuse and neglect prevention programming to OEC, except for the Kinship Fund and Grandparents' Respite Fund, which remain with DSS and the probate court.

The act also authorizes continuity of orders, regulations, and contracts made by the Children's Trust Fund Council and DSS, the former trust fund authorities, once OEC assumes control of the fund.

§ 23 — Accepting Gifts on Behalf of the Children's Trust Fund and DSS

The act transfers, from DSS to OEC, the ability to accept bequests and gifts on behalf of the Children's Trust Fund. It also authorizes the OEC commissioner to accept bequests and gifts on behalf of OEC for (1) people who receive, or may potentially receive, OEC assistance and (2) former recipients of DSS assistance. In doing so, the act eliminates the DSS commissioner's ability to accept on behalf of DSS bequests and gifts for services for a person receiving assistance or services from DSS.

§§ 20-22 — Federal Child Care Development Fund and Collective Bargaining

The act requires OEC, rather than DSS, to (1) administer the federal block grant that provides much of the funding for the state's child care programs and (2) bargain with unions that represent family child care providers.

DPH PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED TO OEC

§§ 47-59 & 70 — Child Day Care Services' Licensing and Inspection

The act transfers, from DPH to OEC, day care licensing, inspection, regulation, investigation, and license revocation duties. These responsibilities

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relate to child day care centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes. OEC must, among other things:

1. receive and collect license applications and fees,
2. require day care staff to submit to criminal history and child abuse records checks,
3. notify licensees in writing of new regulations OEC adopts within 60 days after their effective date, and
4. conduct joint investigations with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

The act also requires OEC, rather than DPH, to inspect child day care centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes. OEC must:

1. make yearly unannounced visits, inspections, or investigations of all licensed day care centers and group day care homes, rather than biennial visits as required by state regulations; and
2. make yearly unannounced visits, inspections, or investigations of all, rather than one-third, of licensed family day care homes. (The act removes the requirement that these visits or inspections take place during customary business hours.)

The act also requires local health directors to inspect all licensed day care centers and group day care homes biennially (as required by existing state regulations).

§§ 75-83 — *Youth Camp Oversight*

The act transfers youth camp regulation duties from DPH to OEC. These duties include licensing, discipline, license revocation, annual inspection, investigation, and regulation promulgation. It requires OEC to verify the health, safety, and recordkeeping practices of camps before issuing or renewing youth camp licenses.

OEC also assumes DPH’s authority to accept federal grants or private funds for youth camps.

§ 74 — *OEC and DPH MOA*

The act permits OEC to enter into an MOA for FY 15 with DPH for assisting with, and sharing information regarding, (1) day care licensing and investigation and (2) records on (a) DSS participants in child care programs and youth camps and (b) DPH abuse and neglect investigations of licensed day care providers.

§§ 11-13, 16, 19, 27, 33-34, 38-40 & 68 — TRANSFER OF GRANT AND LOAN PROGRAMS

The act transfers a number of SDE grant and loan programs to OEC (see Table 2). The majority of these programs’ substance and content remain the same, unless noted in the narrative following the table.

Table 2: SDE Grant and Loan Programs Transferred to OEC

<i>Act §</i>	<i>Grants / Loan Programs</i>	<i>Description</i>
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12	Head Start Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal child development grant program for nonprofit entities and boards of education in towns with children ages birth to five receiving temporary family assistance
13 & 19	Competitive school district grant for school readiness seats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant program that allows competitive school districts to buy school readiness spaces in other districts
16	Transitional school district grants for school readiness seats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-funded grant program that provides spaces in school readiness programs for eligible children in transitional school districts
33	Subsidy program to purchase day care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program permits OEC to buy, or provide subsidies to parents to buy, day care services from schools, centers, homes, family resource centers, Head Start programs, or boards of education • Gives grants to school readiness program providers to increase their day care services hours
34	Supplemental quality enhancement grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded on a competitive basis to child day care and school readiness providers; may be used for various purposes
38	Child care facilities loan guarantee program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantees loans for expanding or developing child care and child development centers in the state • Allows OEC to enter into contracts with quasi-public agencies, banks, or nonprofits to administer the program; requires OEC to authorize all loan guarantees
39	Child care facilities direct revolving loan program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides loans and loan guarantees for costs incurred with developing child care facilities • Allows OEC to enter into contracts with quasi-public agencies, banks, or nonprofits to administer the program; requires OEC to

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		authorize all loan guarantees
40	Debt service reserve fund for Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA)-financed child care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows OEC to pay debt service on loans, as well as determine the terms and amounts of the debt service, from available appropriations of the treasurer designated for child care facility debt service
68	CHEFA loans for day care centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires OEC, rather than SDE, to provide state financial assistance to day care centers that have received CHEFA loans through the Connecticut Child Care Facilities Program until the centers fully pay off their loans (see BACKGROUND).

SUBSTANTIVE GRANT AND LOAN PROGRAM CHANGES

§ 13 — *Competitive Grant Program Expansion*

The act adds alliance district towns to the types of towns that are eligible to apply for competitive grants for school readiness spaces. This adds at least three towns to the pool of towns that may receive these grants. By law, an alliance district is one that is among the 30 lowest districts when ranked by district performance index, which measures academic performance derived from students’ weighted results on statewide mastery tests. Under existing law, priority school districts, former priority school districts, and the 50 towns that rank the lowest in town wealth when compared to all towns in Connecticut are also eligible. A priority school district has students with low standardized test scores and high levels of poverty; there are 15 such districts.

The act also allows competitive grant recipients to use the funds to purchase school readiness spaces in programs that are “seeking accreditation.” Prior law limited the funds to purchasing seats in accredited programs only. The act defines programs “seeking accreditation” as those (1) seeking accreditation from (a) the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or (b) a Head Start on-site program review instrument or a successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations or (2) attempting to meet criteria the early childhood commissioner establishes.

The act also changes the competitive grant amount for which a town or regional school readiness council may apply. Under prior law, the grant could not exceed \$107,000 unless an applicant town had two or more priority schools in one district (see BACKGROUND). The act makes this amount a floor, rather than a ceiling, for all towns and councils that apply, including those towns with more than one priority school. It also requires the OEC commissioner, when awarding

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competitive grants, to give preference to towns that increase the number of school readiness spaces.

The act allows any town that receives a competitive grant to use it to prepare a facility and staff for school readiness program operation during the entire five-year grant term. Prior law allowed competitive grants to be used for such purposes only during the first three years of the grant term.

The act also allows the commissioner to use unexpended school readiness funds to develop a plan to provide universal access to school readiness spaces.

§ 14 – State Per-Pupil School Readiness Reimbursement

The act increases the state’s per-pupil cost reimbursement for school readiness programs from a maximum of \$8,346 to a maximum of \$8,670 beginning in FY 15.

§ 29 — Grants for Schools as Day Care Facilities

The act requires the SDE commissioner, instead of the DSS commissioner, to establish a program to provide grants to municipalities, local school boards, and child care providers to encourage the use of school facilities for before- and after-school child day care.

§ 85 — NEW SCHOOL READINESS GRANT

The act requires the OEC commissioner to establish a new grant program to enable eligible towns and regional school readiness councils to (1) start new school readiness classrooms and (2) provide spaces to eligible children in school readiness programs that are accredited or seeking accreditation. The commissioner determines the time and manner of application. The act does not specify any criteria for evaluating applications or programs after they receive a grant.

The act defines “eligible towns” as those that (1) contain a priority school or (2) are ranked among the 50 poorest in the state but whose school district is not a priority school district. It defines “eligible regional school readiness councils” as those composed of two or more towns or school districts that contain a priority school.

It defines “eligible children” as children ages three-to-five years who are too young to enroll in kindergarten but will attend a school readiness program and who live in:

1. an area served by a priority school or former priority school,
2. a town ranked among the 50 poorest but not in a priority school district,
3. a town formerly ranked among the 50 poorest but not in a priority school district, or
4. a town designated as an alliance district that is not a priority school district.

These are the same criteria for the existing competitive school readiness grant program. Towns benefitting from the new grant are also eligible for existing competitive readiness grants (see BACKGROUND).

PLANS TO INCREASE PRESCHOOL ACCESS AND PRESCHOOL SURVEY

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§ 84 — School Readiness Universal Access Plan

The act requires the OEC commissioner to develop a plan to provide spaces in school readiness programs, either accredited or seeking accreditation, for all eligible children. The commissioner must submit the plan to the governor by January 1, 2015.

§§ 86-87 — Preschool Experience Survey

The act requires the OEC commissioner to develop a preschool survey, in consultation with SDE, by March 1, 2015. Local or regional boards of education may provide the survey to parents or guardians of children enrolling in kindergarten, along with required registration materials.

The board must use the survey to collect the following information:

- 1. whether the child has participated in a preschool program and
- 2. (a) if the child has participated in a preschool program, the nature, length, and setting of the program or (b) if the child has not, the reasons why.

For children who have not participated in a preschool program, the survey may ask about, among other topics:

- 1. financial difficulty,
- 2. lack of transportation,
- 3. parental choice regarding enrollment,
- 4. limitations related to available programs' hours of operation, and
- 5. any other barriers to participation.

The act prohibits local or regional boards of education from requiring a parent or guardian to complete the survey as a condition of the child's kindergarten enrollment.

The act also requires PSIS to include data collected from the preschool experience survey.

§ 14 – School Readiness Grant Ineligibility

The act prohibits OEC from providing funding to any local or regional board of education that is a school readiness provider and does not collect data using the preschool experience survey and include it in PSIS. The prohibition begins in the 2015-16 school year.

§ 18 — EARLY CHILDHOOD CABINET

The act assigns to the Early Childhood Cabinet (cabinet) the new duty of advising OEC, within available resources. This replaces a previous duty of coordinating services among state agencies to enhance the health, safety, and learning of children from birth to age nine. Among other things, the act moves the cabinet from SDE to OEC for administrative purposes only.

The act (1) increases the cabinet size, from 20 to 22 members, by adding two new gubernatorial appointees and (2) reconstitutes the cabinet, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Early Childhood Cabinet Membership

<i>New Members</i>	<i>Appointing Authority</i>
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OEC commissioner, or designee	n/a
Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) president, or designee	n/a
Member of school board in an alliance district town	House speaker
Parent of a child attending school in education reform district	House speaker
Representative of an early education and child care provider association	Senate president pro tempore
State philanthropic community representative	Governor
Connecticut State Employees Association representative	Governor
Removed Members	Appointing Authority
SDE representative responsible for programs required under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	SDE commissioner
Higher education institution representative	BOR president
House member	House speaker
Senate member	Senate president pro tempore
Parent of a child attending a priority school district	House speaker
Retained Members	Appointing Authority
Commissioners of SDE, DSS, DPH, DCF, Department of Development Services, or their respective designees	n/a
Commission on Children executive director, or designee	n/a
Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office project director	n/a
Parent of a child who attends or attended a school readiness program	House minority leader
Early childhood education local provider representative	Senate minority leader
Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance representative	House majority leader
State-funded child day care center representative	Senate majority leader
Representative of a public elementary school with a pre-kindergarten program	Senate president pro tempore
Connecticut Head Start Association representative	Governor
State business community representative	Governor
Office of Policy and Management secretary, or designee	n/a

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Under the act, the governor appoints one co-chairperson from among the cabinet's members, rather than a single chairperson as under prior law. The OEC commissioner serves as the other co-chairperson. The cabinet must meet at least quarterly. The act requires cabinet members to serve without pay and deems them to have resigned if they miss at least half the meetings in a calendar year.

§ 13 — SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The act transfers from SDE to OEC, authority over school readiness staff qualification requirements. By law, school readiness staff qualifications are set in three separate timeframes, with more advanced credentials required for each period. The timeframes are:

1. prior to July 1, 2015;
2. July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2020; and
3. on and after July 1, 2020.

Under prior law, educators could meet these requirements by, among other things, earning a degree or credential in certain programs from an institution (1) accredited by the BOR or the SBE and (2) regionally accredited. The act removes SBE from this requirement and replaces it with the Office of Higher Education (OHE). This change conforms to PA 13-118, which eliminated SBE's role in accrediting higher education institutions.

Until July 1, 2015, the law requires each school readiness classroom, to have an individual with (1) a childhood development credential, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree that includes 12 credits or more in early childhood education or child development or (2) a teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education.

The act requires the OEC commissioner, instead of the education commissioner, to approve the credentialing organization.

The act changes who can determine what courses count toward the required child development credits. Under prior law, the BOR president, in consultation with the SDE and DSS commissioners determined what counted toward the 12 required early childhood or child development credits. The act instead requires the determination to be made by (1) the OEC commissioner alone or (2) the BOR president, in consultation with the OEC commissioner.

For the other two time periods (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2020, and on and after July 1, 2020) with specific job qualification requirements, the act authorizes OEC to approve associate's degree and bachelor's degree early childhood programs with OHE and makes other changes to conform to PA 13-118.

Exceptions

The act allows all school readiness program employees employed on or before June 30, 2015 and meeting certain criteria to remain in their positions despite the new staff requirements that take effect on July 1, 2015. Under prior law, this ability applied to teachers only. Such "grandfathered" employees must hold a (1) bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development or (2) bachelor's degree and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child

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development. The act also removes the requirement that such school readiness program employees who leave one program to work at another submit documentation to SDE of progress toward meeting heightened staff requirements.

The act modifies an existing provision that permits an individual who holds a bachelor's degree to ask for a review of whether his or her degree has a sufficient concentration in early childhood education to satisfy staffing credential requirements that begin on July 1, 2015. Under the act, the:

1. review is conducted by OEC rather than SDE;
2. individual must hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development or a bachelor's degree and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development but not from an institution granted approval and accreditation from OEC, OHE, or BOR; and
3. review determines whether the individual meets the requirements for those holding a bachelor's degree that start on July 1, 2015, rather than the earlier requirements. Under prior law, a person with any non-early childhood bachelor's degree could seek such a review.

Use of Unexpended Funds

The act transfers to the OEC commissioner the authority to use up to \$500,000 of any unexpended priority school district school readiness funds, if available, to provide professional development to state-funded early childhood program providers and staff members. It removes the requirement that the funds only be used for a professional development program offered through the Connecticut State University System.

By law, the funds provide up to \$5,000 per year to assist individual early childhood program staff members who are attending a college or university course leading to a bachelor's degree to satisfy school readiness staff qualifications. The act (1) suspends this authority until July 1, 2015 and (2) allows funds to be used to support associate's degree coursework from July 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.

The act allows the money to also be used for staff receiving noncredit, competency-based training approved by OEC up to \$1,000 per staff member per year. It removes the requirement that priority be given to staff members attending in-state public and private institutions of higher education.

Under the act, the OEC commissioner alone determines how much unexpended funds will be distributed. Under prior law, the SDE commissioner made this determination in consultation with the BOR president.

§ 63 — MANDATED REPORTERS AT OEC AND DPH

The act adds to the list of statutorily required mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect (1) any OEC employee responsible for licensing day care centers, group day care homes, family day care homes, or youth camps and (2) all DPH employees. Under prior law, only DPH employees responsible for day care or youth camp licensing were mandated reporters.

OTHER CHANGES

§ 67 — Evidence of Workers' Compensation Insurance

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The act allows applicants seeking a license or permit from OEC to, as an alternative to presenting a physical certificate of workers' compensation insurance, write on the license or permit renewal form (1) the name of the insurer, (2) insurance policy number, (3) effective dates of coverage, and (4) attestation that the information is true and accurate. Under existing law, this option applies to applicants seeking a license or permit from DPH or the Department of Consumer Protection.

§§ 71-73 — *Teachers' Retirement System (TRS)*

The act makes conforming changes that allow any OEC employee who is a member of TRS from prior employment to continue as a member in that system while working at OEC.

§ 1 — ADDING DYSLEXIA TO THE IEP FORM

The act requires SDE to add dyslexia to the standard IEP form that planning and placement teams use to describe the special education and related services for a special education student. Specifically, by January 1, 2015, SDE must add "SLD – Dyslexia" under the "specific learning disabilities" heading in the "primary disability" section of the form. Dyslexia is covered by state and federal special education laws, but previously did not appear on the IEP form. Dyslexia is a reading disability often characterized by difficulty in decoding letters and words.

Prior law was silent regarding what must be included on the IEP form, but state regulations require that all districts use a standardized form that SBE approves. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1) requires school districts to provide appropriate educational services to students with disabilities and (2) specifies the purpose and elements of an IEP.

§ 2 — DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The act requires that, beginning July 1, 2015, all teacher preparation programs that lead to professional teacher certification include instruction on detecting and recognizing, and evidence-based interventions for, students with dyslexia. By law, these teacher preparation programs must already include instruction on literacy skills and best practices in the field of literacy training.

§ 3 — PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AND KINDERGARTEN

By law, a local or regional board of education must, whenever a child has been identified as requiring special education, immediately inform his or her parents or guardians of the laws relating to special education and of their rights under those laws. The act requires the information to include explicit notice of a parent's or guardian's right, under existing law, to withhold a child age (1) five from enrolling in kindergarten until age six and (2) six from enrolling in kindergarten until age seven.

§ 88 — REPEALER

The act repeals a number of provisions that became obsolete on OEC's

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creation, including the interagency agreement on school readiness, the coordinated system of early care and child development, and SDE's duty to develop a school readiness-to-kindergarten information sharing system.

BACKGROUND

Coordinated System of Early Care and Education and Child Development

In 2011, the governor appointed a planning director to create a plan for consolidating early childhood programs and services across several agencies into one coordinated system of early care and education and child development. This coordinated system was the precursor to OEC.

Prior law required the coordinated system to accomplish 25 tasks that address the following areas:

1. program reporting and data analysis,
2. student assessment,
3. program assessment,
4. family and parental involvement,
5. outreach and coordination,
6. funding,
7. licensing, and
8. professional development (CGS § 10-16bb (b)).

School Readiness Program

By law, a "school readiness program" is a nonreligious, state-funded education program that provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience of at least 450 hours and 180 days for children between ages three and five who are too young to enroll in kindergarten (CGS § 10-16p).

Program providers eligible for funding include local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers, family resource centers, child day care centers, Head Start programs, and preschool programs.

Priority School

A priority school is one located in a nonpriority district where 40% or more of school lunches served are served to children with family incomes low enough to be eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches (CGS § 10-16p(a)(3)).

PSIS

PSIS is a statewide, standardized electronic data collection and reporting system that tracks and reports data relating to student, teacher, school, and district performance growth. It makes this data available to local and regional boards of education for use in evaluating educational performance and growth of teachers and students enrolled in Connecticut public schools (CGS § 10-10a).

Connecticut Child Care Facilities Program

This program, established by CHEFA, finances low-interest loans for child care and child development centers, family resource centers, and Head Start programs (CGS § 10a-194c).

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