

Education Committee Public Hearing

March 1, 2017

SB 912 An Act Concerning Revisions to the Staff Qualifications Requirement for Early Childhood Educators.

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Lavielle, my name is _____ and I am the Director of _____ and a member of the State Funded Centers Director's Forum, a statewide network of 103 child development centers serving over 4,000 infants, toddlers and three and four year old children. The Centers were established in 1968 by state statute to provide high quality child care for low income working families in approximately 63 cities and towns in CT. Many centers participate in the State School Readiness Program and over the years benefited from the CHEFA loan program to build and renovate our child development centers. We are a critical component of the early care and education system in Connecticut and overall economy of the state.

I am here today to testify in support of several bills before you and offer recommendations to improve the stated intent of the proposed legislation.

Raised Bill 912, AAC Revisions to the Staff Qualifications Requirement for Early Childhood Educators.

In sections B and C the language seeks to expand the teaching pool of qualified staff to include teachers graduating from regionally accredited colleges, eliminated the added burden of an approval process from the Office of Early Childhood that the "program of studies" from the college be approved by the Office and go through a review process called ECTC or Early Childhood Teacher Credential. We support the intent of the language but the way it is currently written it does not eliminate this barrier for teachers to meet the requirements.

We recommend you delete the following language from both sections:

Section B "provided such associate degree program is approved by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or the Office of Higher Education and the Office of Early Childhood"

Section C "provided such bachelor's degree program is approved by the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the Office of Early Childhood."

Section B delete (III) of the proposed new language and retain the original language of PA 15-134 that states "such bachelor degree shall include a concentration in early childhood education, including, but not limited to early childhood education, child study, child development, or human growth and development"

Currently, only teachers graduating from ECTC approved Colleges are eligible to teach in publicly funded programs including infant toddler and preschool teachers. (PA 14-39)

Currently, there are only 14 approved ECTC approved colleges in Connecticut.

Nine of which are for Associates Degrees including Gateway, Housatonic, Tunxis, Goodwin, Capital, Naugatuck, Norwalk, Quinebaug and Three Rivers; and Goodwin, Post, Charter Oak, UConn, ECSU for Bachelor Degrees. ECTC for infant toddler teachers is a smaller pool including only six approved colleges, five for Associates and only one at UConn for a Bachelor Degree.

This process limits the pool of qualified teachers and exacerbates the already difficult task of hiring teachers with a BA when compensation is stagnate and well below comparable positions in the public school system. *Example: If a teacher graduates from St. Josephs College with a Degree in Early Childhood, they would have to go through a review process and not automatically be accepted. As a Director I now have to say to this highly qualified person, I can hire you conditionally and give you low wages and by the way you now have to go through an approval process to see if your course of studies is acceptable to OEC. This is not a rationale process.*

The state process is redundant and acts as a barrier for hiring qualified staff from prestigious colleges like Bank Street, Columbia, Wheelock or St. Joseph College and many more private and public institutions. The bill before you does nothing to address the crisis situation facing publicly funded centers. Regionally Accredited institutions of higher education meet high standards for course of study and many colleges go on to get NCATE/NAEYC approval. The ECTC process creates an unnecessary bureaucratic level to the early care and education system and does nothing to address the needs of teachers and programs in the real world.

State Funded Child Development Centers embrace high standards, teacher qualifications and all the components of a high quality system. Recent public policies promote investment in pre-K in the public sector: Alliance Districts, Smart Start, Charter Schools and Magnate Schools -vital investments. But without comparable financial support for child care centers to pay our teachers that provide full year, full day services to children birth to school age, the child care industry cannot compete with these free programs in the public school settings.

We ask that you review the current system for teacher approval and provide flexibility and a more stream lined approach to staff qualifications that opens up the pool of teachers rather than the current restrictive system in place. in addition, the CT Early Childhood Alliance is submitting full Bill language with recommended changes.

HB 7155 AAC Requiring the Office of Early Childhood to Develop A proposed Early Childhood Educator Compensation Schedule.

We support this legislation in order to appropriately compensate teachers in publically funded programs that must meet NAYEC accreditation program standards and have a Bachelor Degree by 2020. Given the drastic budget cuts to Care4Kids, a priority funding stream for low and moderate income families to obtain quality child care; and given the disparity among publically funded early care and education programs including Alliance Districts, Magnate Schools, Charter Schools, Smart Start, Head Start, School Readiness and State Funded Child Development Centers; it is imperative for the Office of Early Childhood to review and make recommendations for parity among all programs based on objective criterion.

Currently there is no rationale formula for different funding streams and this hodgepodge of programs seems counterintuitive to the mission of the Office of Early Childhood that is mandated to develop a coordinated, cohesive early care and education system that serves families and children. This bill will move the system forward and we urge you to support its passage. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.