
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5450

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.

SUMMARY

By law, state-funded early childhood education program staff must meet an increasingly advanced level of educational attainment over the next three years. These heightened staff qualification requirements increase in three distinct phases. This bill extends the duration of each phase by two years, giving staff more time to comply with the education attainment requirements.

It also requires the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to complete an analysis of the state-funded early childhood education staff qualifications requirement, within available appropriations, and submit it and the office's recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2020.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018, except the provisions on OEC's analysis take effect upon passage (§ 2).

§ 1 — STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

First Phase

Under current law, through June 30, 2018, each classroom must have at least one staff member who meets one of the following qualifications:

1. an early childhood development or equivalent associate credential issued by an organization approved by the OEC commissioner and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from a higher education institution accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) or the Office of Higher Education (OHE) and

regionally accredited,

2. an associate or bachelor's degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from such a higher education institution,
3. a State Board of Education (SBE)-issued teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education, or
4. an associate or bachelor's degree with an early childhood education concentration from a regionally accredited higher education institution.

By law, either the OEC commissioner or the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) president, in consultation with the commissioner, determines whether a classroom teacher has fulfilled the 12 credit minimum for the above select requirements.

The bill extends these current qualification requirements for an additional two years through June 30, 2020. (It appears under existing law that these requirements apply only to school readiness classrooms.)

Second Phase

Under current law, from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2021, staff qualifications for state-funded early childhood education programs require that at least 50% of head classroom teachers meet one of the following standards:

1. hold a SBE-issued teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education;
2. have been issued an early childhood teacher credential;
3. hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from a regionally accredited higher education institution;

4. have been employed by a state-funded early childhood program on or before June 30, 2015, and hold either (a) a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development or (b) a bachelor's degree in another subject area and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development;
5. hold an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development, or an associate or bachelor's degree that is not in early childhood education and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from a regionally accredited higher education institution, subject to OEC review and assessment; or
6. have been employed by the same state-funded early childhood program since 1995 and hold an associate degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development as determined by the OEC commissioner or CSCU president, from a higher education institution accredited by BOR or OHE and regionally accredited (such individuals are grandfathered into the staff qualification requirements only until June 30, 2025).

The remaining head classroom teachers must hold an associate degree with an early childhood concentration from a regionally accredited higher education institution.

The bill extends this heightened phase of qualification requirements by two years, beginning on July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2023.

Third Phase

Under current law, the last phase of the heightened staff qualifications, beginning on July 1, 2021, requires 100% of state-funded early childhood education head classroom teachers to meet one of the following standards:

1. hold a SBE-issued teaching certificate with an early childhood education or early childhood special education endorsement;
2. have been issued an early childhood teacher credential;

3. hold a bachelor's degree with an early childhood education concentration from a regionally accredited higher education institution;
4. have been employed by a state-funded early childhood program on or before June 30, 2015, and hold either a bachelor's degree (a) in early childhood education or child development or (b) and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development;
5. hold an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development, or an associate or bachelor's degree that is not in early childhood education and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from a regionally accredited higher education institution, subject to OEC review and assessment; or
6. have been employed by the same state-funded early childhood program since 1995 and hold an associate degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development as determined by the OEC commissioner or CSCU president, from a higher education institution accredited by BOR or OHE and regionally accredited (such individuals are grandfathered in to the staff qualification requirements only until June 30, 2025).

The bill postpones this final phase of qualification requirements by two years; thus, it begins on July 1, 2023.

§ 2 — ANALYSIS OF STAFF QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Under the bill, OEC's analysis must at least do the following:

1. review the goals of the requirement for individuals with the primary responsibility for a classroom of children to hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education, and assess whether a bachelor's degree requirement effectively achieves these goals;
2. examine whether the state's implementation process for

bringing early childhood education programs (i.e., programs that accept state funds for infant, toddler, and preschool spaces for child care or school readiness) into compliance with the staff qualifications requirement is effective;

3. assess how the staff qualifications requirement affects the early childhood education field, including its effects on educators, program providers, children, parents, and families;
4. provide a cost-benefit analysis of the staff qualifications requirement for the state, early childhood education program providers and educators, and children and families; and
5. consider alternative approaches to achieving (a) the bachelor's degree staff qualifications requirement or (b) the goals of this requirement.

The bill also requires OEC to seek public input and feedback from the following constituencies when conducting the above analysis: early childhood education program providers, early childhood educators, and parents.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 36 Nay 0 (03/19/2018)