

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5169

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF

Title: EARLY CHILDHOOD.

Vote Date: 3/19/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/26/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REASONS FOR BILL:

HB 5169 implements the recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC):

Sec. 1: allows homeless children to attend child care centers/group day care homes for up to 90 days if they don't meet OEC's vaccination requirements; requires care center to maintain a record of such exemption for two years after child's attendance

Sec. 2: allows the same as section 1 for homeless children attending family child care homes

Sec. 3: continues to allow child care centers/group child care homes to ask OEC commissioner to waive the requirement that that a new license application be filed for a change of operator/owner/location (as under current law), but removes requirement that this waiver request must be submitted before the change occurs

Sec. 4:

- allows family child care homes to accept up to three additional children during summer months if there is an OEC-approved assistant or substitute staff member present; allows all of provider's children to also be present if there are more than three; does not require assistant staff if all additional children are the provider's
- specifies that licensing requirements don't apply to (1) private school child care if the school only provides services to children covered under SBE approval or accreditation and (2) formal/informal child care arrangements among relatives in their own homes,

specifically grandparents and great-grandparents (removes parents' nieces/nephews and cousins)

Sec. 5: changes minimum amount of School Readiness grant from \$25,000 to “5% of the total grant allocation”

Sec. 6: requires day care centers to give their contact info to OEC, rather than local police, and requires OEC to share this info with DESPP through an MOU to use in an emergency notification system

Sec. 7: excludes the following Care 4 Kids recipients from comprehensive background checks: relatives who provide child care in that child's home (OEC testified that it is using a triple alternative background check method that is more effective than the FBI's check; OEC believes the FBI check requirement discourages more family members from enrolling in Care 4 Kids due to \$87 cost)

Substitute language in Section 1 and 2 adds language to statute instead of requiring OEC to make a regulation; in Section 6 requires, rather than allows, OEC to enter into an emergency info data-sharing MOU with Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP).

EFFECTIVE: JULY 1, 2018

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

David Wilkinson, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood (OEC):

Commissioner Wilkinson testified on behalf of OEC and explained to the committee the requested changes and why they are necessary.

Sections 1 & 2

These sections would allow children experiencing homelessness to immediately enroll in an early childhood center or family child care setting by granting their parents a ninety day grace period to submit health, physical and immunization records. The Commissioner explained that families experiencing homelessness do not always have immediate access to these types of records. He mentioned families coming to Connecticut from Puerto Rico due to Hurricane Maria as a prime example of why this 90-day grace period is needed. The federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) new rules require that states must prioritize children whose families are experiencing homelessness for child care services including providing families with time to comply with a state's immunization and health requirements. OEC included a 90-day grace period provision in its Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) state plan.

Section 3

This section allows child care centers and group child care homes to continue to ask the Commissioner of OEC to waive the requirement that a new license application be filed for a change of operator, owner, or location but removes the requirement that this request be done *before* the change occurs. Ideally the Department prefers prior notification; however, in some

cases (e.g. an operator changes from an individual to a corporation) an operator does not request a waiver prior to the change. Currently, if this happens, an operator must cease operation and submit a new licensing application before reopening. To avoid significantly disrupting care for families and children, this proposal would give us the discretion to approve a request for an application waiver. In the absence of a waiver, OEC is bound by law to require that a provider cease operations, thereby causing children to lose care and introducing significant burden for parents, introducing significant child safety concerns. This proposal is intended to reduce unnecessarily severe regulatory penalties. The waiver will enable OEC to avoid disruption in services for families and children, where law does not currently give us this option.

Section 4

This section allows family child care homes to accept up to three additional children during summer months if there is an OEC-approved assistant or substitute staff member present. It also allows all of the provider's children to also be present if there are more than three, it does not require assistant staff if all additional children are the provider's. The Commissioner explained that this provision "would further enable the state's private child care system to address significant increases in child care needs in the summer."

This provision specifies that licensing requirements don't apply to private school child care if the school only provides services to children covered under SBE approval or accreditation and formal/informal child care arrangements among relatives in their own homes, specifically grandparents and great-grandparents (removes parents' nieces/nephews and cousins).

Section 5

The section changes the reference to School Readiness administrative funding to "at least 5 percent of the grant allocation." The change conforms to current payment policy and practice.

Section 6

This section requires day care centers to give their contact info to OEC, rather than local police and requires OEC to share this info with DESPP through an agreement to use in an emergency notification system.

Section 7

This section excludes relatives who are Care 4 Kids recipients who provide child care in a child's home from comprehensive background checks. The Commissioner testified that it is using a triple alternative background check method that is more effective than the FBI's check. OEC believes the FBI check requirement discourages more family members from enrolling in Care 4 Kids due to the \$87 cost.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Terry Nowakowski, Chief Operating Officer, Partnership for Strong Communities:

Terry Nowakowski testified specifically on Section 1 of HB 5169, which allows children experiencing homelessness to immediately enroll in a child care program and gives their parents a ninety day grace period in which to submit their health, physical, and immunization records. She emphasized the fact that immediate access to child care allows these families that are experiencing hardship the opportunity to focus on other challenges such as securing employment and housing stability.

Liza Andrews, Director of Public Policy & Communications, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence Services (CCADV):

CCADV submitted testimony specifically supporting section 1 of the bill. They explained that each year close to 1,000 children stay with a parent in one of Connecticut's 18 domestic violence shelters. For instance in FY2017, 60% of the children staying in our shelter system were 6 years old or younger. In most cases these families are fleeing increasingly dangerous situations and don't have time to collect belongings, let alone medical and health documentation. Having immediate access to a structured and supportive child care program is very beneficial to both a child who is experiencing the trauma and stress of homelessness and their parents as it gives them time to seek employment, participate in job training and search for permanent housing.

Nicole Updegrave, Associate Policy Fellow, CT Voices for Children

CT Voices for Children submitted testimony also on Section 1 of the bill and expressed similar sentiments to CCADV.

Georgia Goldburn, Director, Hope Child Development Center

Georgia Goldburn testified on behalf of Hope Development Center in support of Section 6 of the HB 5169. She explained that current law requires child care providers to give their contact information to the local police in case there is an emergency, but that most centers are already giving it to the OEC for the purpose of sharing with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to be used through the emergency notification system. They support this legislative change because it removes any confusion as to who providers need to be giving their information to, and makes current practice, law.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Amy L. Orschel

Date: March 28, 2018