

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5450

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR

Title: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.

Vote Date: 3/19/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/14/2018

File No.: 320

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to affirm the qualifications needed for early childhood educators. These regulations are in place to ensure that state funds are going to establishments that are maintaining a set standard for early childhood education. This bill specifically changes the standard from a Bachelor's degree to an Associate degree. This is in an effort to higher retention rates, and make the Early Childhood Education more easily accessible. It is often a challenge for full time staff members to obtain a four-year degree, there for having the standard lowered to an Associate's degree will allow more people to be eligible to hold a job in this field.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

David Wilkinson Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood:

David Wilkinson Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood testified in opposition for HB 5450. Wilkinson argued that the science indisputably shows that the earliest years of a child's life are most essential to development. Yet, in Connecticut the teachers who are responsible for this development are compensated less than any other teachers. If a task force is created, the Office of Early Childhood is ready to work with the team.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mary Cecchinato, Executive Director of the Torrington Child Care Center, and Co-Chair of the State Child Development Center Director's Forum:

Mary Cecchinato testified on behalf of the Torrington Child Care Center in support of HB 5450. HB 5450 recognizes the difficulty for programs to meet the current 2018 deadline for 50% of teachers to have an Associates and 50% have a BA; and the 2020 deadline of all teachers having a BA degree by 2020. Passage of this bill is very important to the Torrington Child Care Center, as they are struggling to meet the 2018 deadlines. The resumes that they have coming in for open positions do not fill the requirements set by the state.

Eileen Gunning Costello, Danbury School Readiness Council:

Eileen Gunning Costello testified on behalf of the Danbury School Readiness Council, in support of allowing Bachelors plus 12 ECE credits return as a viable qualification for Early Childhood Education. There is a limited number of students graduating with a Bachelors in ECE, in some parts of the state there are no students graduating with that degree. Danbury does not even offer an ECE Bachelors program. However, many students with degrees in elementary education, psychology, sociology and other fields would be great teachers, and have offered to take 12 credits in education and early childhood education. If that is not possible, then accepting an Associates is a great option, as stated in HB 5450.

Susan Radway, Director of Riverfront Children's Center:

Susan Radway testified on behalf of the Riverfront Children's Center in support of HB 5450. This bill would eliminate the Bachelor Degree requirement for publicly funded early childhood education programs. The bill underscores the extreme difficulty for programs to meet the current 2018 deadline for 50% of teachers having an Associate's degree and 50% with a Bachelor's. It is unrealistic for teachers to meet the 2020 deadline for all teachers to have a bachelor's degree, when early-childhood teachers in community-based centers make around \$13- \$15.00 per hour. With these wages, teachers simply cannot afford additional higher education.

Eddie Reichard Director of Sleeping Giant Day Care and Co-Chair of the State Funded Childhood Funded Development Center Director's Forum:

Eddie Reichard testified on behalf of Sleeping Giant Day Care in support of HB 5450. The bill recognizes that it will be difficult for programs to meet the current 2018 deadline for 50% of teachers to have an Associates and 50% have a BA; and the 2020 deadline of all teachers having a BA degree by 2020.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Deborah Adams, Former preschool teacher, former school readiness funded program Director, and former higher education faculty member:

Deborah Adams testified in opposition to HB 5450, on the basis that decreasing the requirement from a Bachelor's degree to an associate degree is a step backwards for the state. Adams recommended continuing to phase in Bachelor's degree specific to early childhood programs with different percentages that 50/50. Possibly consider extending the date to meet the Bachelor's level requirement, as many teachers have met the 2021 bachelor's requirement already. Adams asked the committee to consider engaging stakeholders to examine a method of compensation for programs that have met all of the state requirements. Adams also suggested requiring the Board of Regents to and the office of Higher Education to conduct a needs assessment of the early childhood programs through a marketing lens. Lastly, Adams stated that Connecticut should review the programs in other states, especially the finance workforce report for Early Childhood programs.

Paige M. Bray, EdD Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education Co- Chair, Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty, Windsor Resident and Parent:

Paige Bray testified on behalf of Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty in opposition to HB 5450. The qualification for the early childhood education should reflect current need and strengthen the profession; this would require the fulfillment of two and four year degrees. The Early childhood Education Pathways should also strengthen the career pathways for the diversity of women in the profession. Those working in Early Learning need to continue their own learning. The legislature needs to implement creative and collaborative solutions for in the next twelve months for funding and pathways. This would raise individual capacity and compensation together. The two tier reality proposed in this bill would create a divide that does a disservice to the children. A taskforce on Social and Emotional learning needs to be formed, including members of respective state offices, early care, and educational professionals.

Michelle Dent, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education:

Michelle Dent testified against HB 5450 on behalf of Early Childhood Education. This is due to the fact that Dent feels strongly that changing the requirement for teacher education from a bachelor's degree to an associate's degree is not the best solution. In 60 credits a student obtaining an associate's degree will take courses in both general education and early childhood education, and are provide with as much knowledge and experience as they can get. However, it is impossible to provide them with the true depth and breadth of the competencies we expect them to have in just 60 credits. Elementary school teachers fulfill 120 credits for certification, and yet are our early childhood teachers are expected to acquire the same amount of knowledge in only 60 credits. This discrepancy in the amount of education requirements for lead teachers in his opinion is not the answer. The children in the classrooms deserve better.

Early Childhood Education Consortium:

The Early Childhood Education Consortium testified in opposition to HB 5450. They stated in their commentary that HB 5450 will limit opportunities for teachers as well as children, by modifying the cap on the educational requirement for early childhood classroom lead teachers to an Associate's degree level. Bachelor- level training promotes and advances the skills that are essential to addressing the learning needs of all children, including

individualized instruction, research strategy, and advocacy on behalf of children. HB 5450 discourages members of the workforce to continue their education and professional development.

Denise Falzone, TEAM Inc.:

Denise Falzone testified on behalf of TEAM Inc, strongly opposing HB 5450. For one, this furthers the notion that early childhood educators are “baby sitters”, currently only making 32% of what elementary school teachers make. Also, retracting the bachelor’s degree requirement would set the early education field back, and would also undermine the foundation that students who attend preschool learn.

The Perry Preschool Project measured children living in poverty, who were considered a high risk for poor school performance. The study tested if these students would perform better after attending a high-quality preschool. Students who were involved in the study were tracked until the age of 40. Those that attended a high performing preschool saw higher earnings, committed fewer crimes, were more likely to hold a job, and were more likely to graduate from high school. The study noted that the classroom they studied were all run by teachers with Bachelor’s degrees and concluded that teaches with “early childhood training was most relevant to their classroom practices”.

Bob Hannahfin President of AACTE – CT:

Bob Hannahfin testified on behalf of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in opposition to HB 5450. In Hannahfin’s commentary, he stated that the qualification for the early childhood education should reflect both the need for educators and the pathways available to strengthen the workforce. This should include two and four year degree programs, with a supportive timeline that guarantees quality early care and education in a multitude of settings that encourages the diversity of women in the early childhood profession.

David C Morgan, TEAM Inc.:

David Morgan testified on behalf of TEAM Inc. in opposition of HB 5450. In his commentary Morgan stated that HB 5450 does not reflect the commitments of the Early Childhood workforce. It also does not recognize those who have already progressed toward the attainment of a Bachelor’s Degree. HB 5450 correctly recognizes that the current July 2018 and July 2021 deadlines are unattainable. Morgan recommended that the legislature move the deadlines, and or revises the percentages towards a more realistic progression. Morgan also requested that a taskforce be established to investigate recommendations for how members of the workforce can meet the future Early Childhood credential deadline.

Jamie Peterson TEAM Inc.:

Jamie Peterson testified on behalf of TEAM Inc. in opposition to HB 5450. Keeping the requirement for Early Childhood Educators to obtain a Bachelor’s degree creates the potential for early childhood to be viewed as a more attractive career. This will encourage a stronger workforce, increase the wages of staff, and create stronger retention rates. Research shows that increased credentials in any field will lead to higher outcomes.

Investing early into the future of the Connecticut's children should be a main priority. Having educators maintain a bachelor's degree would support the dynamic needs of the children and families that are being served by early childhood educators.

Michele O Neill, Educational Issues Specialist CEA:

Michele O Neill testified on behalf of the CEA in opposition of HB 54550. Early childhood educators have a significant impact on their young students. Research shows that 80% of a child's brain development occurs before the age of five. The CEA would prefer to keep the Bachelor's degree requirement, and instead extend the deadline for all staff to obtain the degree. The CEA also requested that the 50/50 staff requirement previously included in Section 2, Subsection (B) of CGS 10-16p be retained, however, with a gradual phasing in of the bachelor's degree requirement. In the testimony O'Neill addressed the fact that others may be asking for a study group to be convened. If this is so, CEA would support the effort and have asked to be included.

Nicole Updegrove, Associate Policy Fellow Connecticut Voices for Children: Nicole Updegrove testified on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children in opposition to HB 5450. She stated that Connecticut needs to develop a realistic plan to support early childhood educators. They need to have access to higher education, so that child care that children deserve by lowering required credentials.

Kelly Willette, TEAM Inc Head Teacher Mentor:

Kelly Willette testified against HB 5450 on behalf of TEAM Inc. Decreasing the degree requirement would lower standards for our educators and students alike. This bill would deprive students of the best possible learning experience in the classroom. Turnover rates are already considered a major issue, as educators with higher degrees will be passed by for jobs in the field. This will leave these educators with Bachelor's degrees in pursuit of other employment.

John L Cattelan Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs:

John Cattelan testified on behalf of 21 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut. In his testimony, he opposes HB 5450. In Cattelan's comments, he claimed that many early childhood centers will not be able to meet the staff qualifications for School Readiness. Due to this, Cattelan suggested extending the date. However, Cattelan only recommends the date if the requirement for the Bachelor's degree is kept in place. Cattelan also requested that a taskforce be assembled to investigate why there are not enough qualified staff members available for hire. YMCAs in Connecticut currently enroll 3,100 children in Early Care, yet the YMCAs are finding it difficult to find qualified staff.

Liz Fraser Policy Manager Connecticut Association for Human Services:

Liz Fraser testified on behalf of the Connecticut Association for Human Services against HB 5450. At present, they agree that many early childhood education providers are not on track

to meet the 50/50 bachelor's and associates degree goals for staff qualifications by July 2018, and that even fewer providers are on track to meet the 2020 goal of bachelor's degree qualifications for all classroom staff. Due to this, they urge the Committee to push- back deadlines for staff qualifications requirements.

By 2020, at least fifty per cent of staff at early childhood education programs accepting state funds hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education.

By 2025, all of the classroom staff for infant, toddler and preschool early childhood education programs that accept state funds have at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education.

The low wages and limited benefits further the barriers to attracting skilled workers. However, researchers identified the significant role of bachelor's degrees in the ECE programs. When an Early Childhood Educator has a bachelor's degree it produces higher development outcomes. High quality education is critical during the early childhood stages, and will affect the development and future outcomes of children. Early childhood educators should be held to the same standard as educators on the elementary, middle, and high school levels. They should also be treated with same compensation and benefits for this reason.

Merrill Gay, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance:

Merrill Gay testified on behalf of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance in opposition to HB 5450. Gay claimed that the goal of having all early childhood educators obtain a bachelor's degree should not be abandoned. However, Gay stated that the committee could consider changing the requirement for infant/ toddler teachers to an Associate's degree. This is due to the fact that Connecticut lacks sufficient teacher prep programs for the infant and toddler programs.

He went on to say that the committee also needs to focus on implementing a strategy that would develop compensation and raise requirement opportunities; while, also examining the availability of access for education the state, in order to increase the number of potential applicants.

Reported by: Hannah Ellis

Date: April 9, 2018