
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6558 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT.

SUMMARY

This bill allows the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) commissioner to issue up to seven family child care home licenses to a person or group of people who provide child care services in a commissioner-approved space provided through a partnership with an association, organization, corporation, institution, or public or private agency (§ 1). Under current law, family child care home licenses are for child care services provided in the licensee's private home.

The bill also does the following:

1. allows family child care home licensees to use an OEC-approved substitute staff member to provide more than an hour of child care under specific circumstances (§ 1),
2. creates a 13-member early childhood workforce development needs task force (§ 2),
3. expands eligibility for Care 4 Kids child care subsidies to include people enrolled or participating in certain postsecondary education and workforce training programs (§ 3),
4. requires the OEC commissioner to add new categories of parents and caretakers to the list of people who must receive preference in the Care 4 Kids priority intake and eligibility system (§ 3), and
5. requires OEC to allow Care 4 Kids-eligible families to

participate in a state-contracted child care center program in FYs 22 and 23 (§ 4).

*House Amendment "A" (1) adds Danbury to the list of municipalities where the OEC commissioner may issue a family child care home license to a partnership between a child care provider and space provider, (2) adds the provisions about the use of substitute staff in family child care homes, (3) adds the provisions about Care 4 Kids eligibility and participant access to state-contracted child care centers, and (4) makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§ 1 — FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME LICENSE

License Terms and Applicant Eligibility

These licenses must be issued in accordance with existing law (unless otherwise specified under the bill) and may be issued in FYs 22-26 for up to one space in each of the following cities: Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Stamford, or Waterbury. They expire on June 30, 2026, subject to the commissioner's authority to suspend or revoke them under the law (see BACKGROUND).

Application Process

The bill requires prospective licensees for the seven family child care home licenses to submit the following items as part of their licensure application: (1) a copy of the current fire marshal certificate of compliance with the Fire Safety Code and (2) written verification of compliance with the State Building Code, local zoning and building requirements, and local health ordinances. Additionally, the bill allows the OEC commissioner to (1) require applicants to comply with additional conditions related to the health and safety of children to be served in these facilities and (2) waive any requirement that does not apply to these facilities.

§ 1 — SUBSTITUTE STAFF IN FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

The bill allows family child care home licensees to use an OEC-

approved substitute staff member to provide child care for more than one hour while the licensee attends a medical appointment, receives medical treatment, or completes education or training. The bill specifies that using a substitute staff member for these purposes does not constitute a transfer or franchise of the family child care home. The licensee must (1) provide advance notice to the children's parents and guardians about the dates and times the substitute will be providing child care and (2) continue to maintain control of day-to-day operations of the family child care home.

§ 2 — EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

Scope

The bill requires the task force to examine the following:

1. ways to encourage equity-based practices in early childhood education preparation and professional development;
2. ways to address inequity in access to employment opportunities and compensation in the early childhood workforce;
3. the feasibility of creating a new, co-authored license that would offer multiple levels of flexibility to address the range of ages, settings, and roles in the early childhood field, including a professional continuum for assistants; lead teachers; generalists; and specialists such as early interventionist, mental health, integrated special education, and rehabilitation therapies; and
4. workforce demands in the state related to the need for early childhood educators providing child care services for infants and toddlers to age six or eight.

Additionally, the bill requires the task force to make recommendations about the following topics:

1. legislation for early childhood educator preparation requirements;
2. creating a new early childhood teacher license or credential

jointly issued by OEC and the State Department of Education (SDE);

3. developing a unifying framework for early childhood educator preparation, in accordance with the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Council for Exceptional Children – Division of Early Childhood, to offer definition of levels for competencies and compensation such as (a) professional development and alternative routes for aides or classroom assistants; (b) associate degree preparation and alternative routes for assistant teachers; (c) bachelor’s degree preparation or post-baccalaureate work for head teachers; (d) bachelor’s degree preparation, post-baccalaureate work, or graduate degree attainment for specialists; and (e) alignment with competencies to address adult learners, experience in the field, as well as capacity in languages, community content, and cultural norms;
4. methods for increasing compensation related to competency and degree attainment that will work across all sectors of the early care and education sector, including subsidized and parent fee supported programs; and
5. early childhood workforce development and job opportunity creation.

Membership

Table 1 describes the required expertise for the 13 task force members and their respective appointing authorities. The bill allows any members appointed by legislative leaders to be General Assembly members.

Table 1: Task Force Membership

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Member(s) and Required Expertise</i>
House speaker	Early childhood education professor at a Connecticut public higher education institution

	Representative of a school readiness program or state-funded child care center
Senate president pro tempore	Community college faculty member Representative of a private child care provider that is not receiving state financial assistance
House majority leader	Representative of the Capitol Region Education Council regional education service center
Senate majority leader	Family child care home operator or representative of an organization that represents or supports family child care homes
House minority leader	Representative of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Senate minority leader	Representative of a state or national early childhood accrediting organization
N/A	OEC commissioner, or the commissioner's designee
N/A	SDE commissioner, or the commissioner's designee
N/A	Co-chairs of the Connecticut Consortium for the Advancement of Early Childhood Educators
N/A	State Education Resource Center executive director, or the director's designee

The bill requires the above appointments to be made by July 31, 2021, and appointing authorities to fill any vacancies that may arise.

Leadership, Staff, and Meetings

Under the bill, the House speaker's and Senate president pro tempore's appointees must serve as the task force chairpersons, and the Education Committee administrative staff must serve as task for staff. The chairpersons must schedule the first meeting by August 30, 2021.

The task force must report its findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2023. It must terminate on the date it submits the report or on January 1, 2023, whichever is later.

§ 3 — EXPANDED CARE 4 KIDS ELIGIBILITY

The bill expands eligibility for Care 4 Kids child care subsidies to people who are enrolled or participating in any of the following:

1. a public or private college or university,
2. a private occupational school,
3. a job training or employment program administered by a regional workforce development board,
4. a Department of Labor (DOL)-administered apprenticeship program,
5. an alternate route to certification program,
6. an adult education program or other high school equivalency program, or
7. a local Even Start program or other adult education program approved by the OEC commissioner.

The bill specifies that these groups are only eligible for and may receive Care 4 Kids benefits if federal COVID-19 related relief funds are available (i.e., the Coronavirus Response and Related Supplemental Appropriations Act and the American Response Plan).

Additionally, it requires the OEC commissioner to add new categories to the list of people who must receive preference in the Care 4 Kids priority intake and eligibility system. The categories are parents or caretakers who are:

1. participating in a DOL apprenticeship program,
2. enrolled in an adult education program or other high school equivalency program,

3. participating in a job training or employment program administered by a regional workforce development board, or
4. enrolled in a public or private college or university.

BACKGROUND

License Suspension and Revocation

The OEC commissioner may suspend or revoke a family child care home license if the family child care home's owner or operator, an assistant or substitute staff member or employee, or any household member age 16 or older has a criminal history containing felony convictions for, among other things, (1) use of physical force, (2) risk of injury to or impairing morals of children, (3) abandonment of young children, (4) illegal drug sale or possession, (5) sexual assault, or (6) any felony where the victim is a minor (CGS § 19a-87e).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference - APP
Yea 38 Nay 0 (03/15/2021)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 50 Nay 0 (04/21/2021)