



General Assembly

Substitute Bill No. 286

February Session, 2024



AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsections (a) to (c), inclusive, of section 17b-749 of the
2 2024 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following
3 is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

4 (a) The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall establish and operate
5 a child care subsidy program to increase the availability, affordability
6 and quality of child care services for families with a parent or caretaker
7 who (1) is (A) working or attending high school, or (B) subject to the
8 provisions of subsection (d) of this section, is enrolled or participating
9 in (i) a public or independent institution of higher education, (ii) a
10 private career school authorized pursuant to sections 10a-22a to 10a-22o,
11 inclusive, (iii) a job training or employment program administered by a
12 regional workforce development board, (iv) an apprenticeship program
13 administered by the Labor Department's office of apprenticeship
14 training, (v) an alternate route to certification program approved by the
15 State Board of Education, (vi) an adult education program pursuant to
16 section 10-69 or other high school equivalency program, or (vii) a local
17 Even Start program or other adult education program approved by the
18 Commissioner of Early Childhood; [or] (2) receives cash assistance
19 under the temporary family assistance program from the Department of

20 Social Services and is participating in an education, training or other job
21 preparation activity approved pursuant to subsection (b) of section 17b-
22 688i or subsection (b) of section 17b-689d; or (3) is an employee of an
23 early childhood care and education program. Services available under
24 the child care subsidy program shall include the provision of child care
25 subsidies for children under the age of thirteen or children under the
26 age of nineteen with special needs. The Commissioner of Early
27 Childhood may institute a protective service class in which the
28 commissioner may waive eligibility requirements for at-risk
29 populations that meet the guidelines prescribed by the commissioner,
30 and subject to review by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and
31 Management. Such at-risk populations are children placed in a foster
32 home by the Department of Children and Families and for whom the
33 parent or legal guardian receives foster care payments, adopted children
34 for one year from the date of adoption and homeless children and
35 youths, as defined in 42 USC 11434a, as amended from time to time. The
36 Office of Early Childhood shall open and maintain enrollment for the
37 child care subsidy program and shall administer such program within
38 the existing budgetary resources available. The office shall issue a notice
39 on the office's Internet web site any time the office closes the program to
40 new applications, changes eligibility requirements, changes program
41 benefits or makes any other change to the program's status or terms,
42 except the office shall not be required to issue such notice when the
43 office expands program eligibility. Any change in the office's acceptance
44 of new applications, eligibility requirements, program benefits or any
45 other change to the program's status or terms for which the office is
46 required to give notice pursuant to this subsection, shall not be effective
47 until thirty days after the office issues such notice.

48 (b) The commissioner shall establish income standards for applicants
49 and recipients at a level to include a family with gross income up to fifty
50 per cent of the state-wide median income, except the commissioner: (1)
51 [may] May increase the income level up to the maximum level allowed
52 under federal law, (2) upon the request of the Commissioner of Children
53 and Families, may waive the income standards for adoptive families so

54 that children adopted on or after October 1, 1999, from the Department
55 of Children and Families are eligible for the child care subsidy program,
56 [and] (3) shall establish a two-tiered income eligibility threshold in
57 accordance with 45 CFR 98.21(b), as amended from time to time, and (4)
58 shall waive the income standards for any employee of an early
59 childhood care and education program, as defined in section 1 of this
60 act. The commissioner may adopt regulations in accordance with
61 chapter 54 to establish income criteria and durational requirements for
62 such waiver of income standards.

63 (c) The commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of
64 Social Services, shall establish eligibility and program standards
65 including, but not limited to: (1) A priority intake and eligibility system
66 with preference given to serving (A) recipients of temporary family
67 assistance who are employed or engaged in employment activities
68 under the Department of Social Services' "Jobs First" program, (B)
69 working families whose temporary family assistance was discontinued
70 not more than five years prior to the date of application for the child care
71 subsidy program, (C) teen parents, (D) low-income working families,
72 (E) adoptive families of children who were adopted from the
73 Department of Children and Families and who are granted a waiver of
74 income standards under subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section,
75 (F) working families who are at risk of welfare dependency, (G) parents
76 or caretakers participating in an apprenticeship program administered
77 by the Labor Department's office of apprenticeship training, (H) parents
78 or caretakers enrolled in an adult education program pursuant to
79 section 10-69 or other high school equivalency program, (I) parents or
80 caretakers participating in a job training or employment program
81 administered by a regional workforce development board, [and] (J)
82 parents or caretakers enrolled in a public or independent institution of
83 higher education, and (K) employees of early childhood care and
84 education programs, as defined in section 1 of this act; (2) health and
85 safety standards for child care providers not required to be licensed; (3)
86 a reimbursement system for child care services which account for
87 differences in the age of the child, number of children in the family, the

88 geographic region and type of care provided by licensed and unlicensed
89 caregivers, the cost and type of services provided by licensed and
90 unlicensed caregivers, successful completion of fifteen hours of annual
91 in-service training or credentialing of child care directors and
92 administrators, and program accreditation; (4) supplemental payment
93 for special needs of the child and extended nontraditional hours; (5) an
94 annual rate review process for providers which assures that
95 reimbursement rates are maintained at levels which permit equal access
96 to a variety of child care settings; (6) a sliding reimbursement scale for
97 participating families; (7) an administrative appeals process; (8) an
98 administrative hearing process to adjudicate cases of alleged fraud and
99 abuse and to impose sanctions and recover overpayments; (9) an
100 extended period of program and payment eligibility when a parent who
101 is receiving a child care subsidy experiences a temporary interruption
102 in employment or other approved activity; and (10) a waiting list for the
103 child care subsidy program that (A) allows the commissioner to exercise
104 discretion in prioritizing within and between existing priority groups,
105 including, but not limited to, children described in 45 CFR 98.46, as
106 amended from time to time, and households with an infant or toddler,
107 and (B) reflects the priority and eligibility system set forth in subdivision
108 (1) of this subsection, which is reviewed periodically, with the inclusion
109 of this information in the annual report required to be issued annually
110 by the office to the Governor and the General Assembly in accordance
111 with section 17b-733. Such action will include, but not be limited to,
112 family income, age of child, region of state and length of time on such
113 waiting list.

114 Sec. 2. Subsection (l) of section 19a-87b of the 2024 supplement to the
115 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
116 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

117 (l) For the fiscal [years] year ending June 30, 2022, [to June 30, 2026,
118 inclusive] and each fiscal year thereafter, the Commissioner of Early
119 Childhood may issue a license to maintain a family child care home [in
120 New Britain, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Hartford, Danbury or

