

Testimony of Elena Trueworthy, Acting Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood
Before the Education Committee
H.B. 6921 - An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood
Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Leeper, Senator Berthel, Representative Zupkus, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify on the agency's bill, **H.B. 6921 – An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood**.

Section 1 of the bill makes both technical and clarifying changes to Sec. 10-550g, which is the Qualified Staff Member (QSM) staffing requirements for staff working in OEC state-funded Early Start CT contracted programs. This applies to both Early Start CT child care centers and family child care homes caring for infants and toddlers and/or preschool-aged children. The changes are as follows:

- specifies that the effective date of the new requirements is July 1, 2025;
- makes degree requirement language for family child care homes consistent by using “associate degree or higher”;
- clarifies that on-site supervision applies to licensed centers, group child care homes, and license-exempt centers, and off-site supervision only applies to licensed family child care homes;
- clarifies that by July 1, 2035, the designated qualified staff member in family child care homes must hold an associate degree or higher in early childhood education.

Section 2 clarifies under Sec. 19a-421 that youth camps licenses are non-transferrable. Revised language also requires that in addition to a renewal fee, an application must be submitted to renew a license. Addition of the non-transferrable language brings the youth camp statute into alignment with the statutes and regulations governing all other licenses issued by OEC. Non-transferability language protects the health and safety of children attending camp by ensuring that the business or individual to which the license was issued is the actual operator of the youth camp.

Section 3 clarifies under Sec. 19a-410 the definition of “Youth Camp,” “Day Camp,” and “Resident Camp.” There are currently three definitions in statute to define a youth camp. The overarching definition is youth camp with resident camp and day camp further defined. Both the resident camp and day camp definitions include “on any parcel or parcels of land on which there are located dwelling units or buildings,”; however, the definition of youth camp does not. The overall meaning of youth camp is made clearer by removing this language from resident camp and day camp definitions and adding it to youth camp definition.

Section 4 clarifies in Sec. 17a-248b that state agency designated members serving on the Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) are not subject to term limits. These individuals are designated with specific roles and need to remain on the ICC due to the ongoing role and responsibilities of their position and to be able to contribute their expertise. Language is also revised to replace “minority parents” with “parents representing culturally diverse communities” to reflect updated policy practice.

Section 5 removes a report requirement of the Early Childhood Cabinet statute, Sec. 10-16z, to avoid duplication. The OEC has developed a Blue Ribbon 5-year strategic plan to develop an equitable, high-quality, and sustainable system that ensures that every child has a quality educational foundation that will prepare them to grow, learn, and succeed. The OEC is following and tracking progress on the Blue Ribbon plan. As current required in Sec. 10-16z, the annual plan due by December 1, annually, will document the progress made on the components in the federal Head Start Act of 2007 and how the Blue Ribbon plan work aligns with those components.

Section 6 clarifies under Sec. 10-550c that multiple local or regional governance partners in a community or region are not allowed.

Section 7 corrects an oversight in original drafting under Sec. 10-550d. It changes the effective date of establishing a sliding family fee scale under Early Start CT, in alignment with the Care 4 Kids sliding fee scale, to no later than July 1, 2027.

Section 8 amends the Local Governance Partner (LGP) administrative set-aside funding language under Sec. 10-550b. This language provides the Commissioner discretion to determine administrative funding amounts, within available appropriations.

Thank you for your time and attention. The OEC is committed to working together—with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates, and parents—to better serve our families with young children.

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood advances a two-generation family-centered approach in our pursuit of optimal health, safety, and learning outcomes for young children. Through our core programs, we support infant and toddler care, preschool, after-school care, child care and youth camp licensing, home visiting, and early intervention to address developmental delays. OEC is working toward better-coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut’s youngest children and families.