
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6921

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

SUMMARY

The bill makes various changes to statutes affecting early childhood education and programs, including the following:

1. modifying education and supervision requirements for teachers with primary responsibility for a classroom of children in an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) early care and education program (“qualified designated staff members”) (§ 1);
2. specifying that youth camp licensees cannot transfer their licenses, and when renewing them, must apply to OEC, in addition to paying existing law’s renewal fees (§§ 2 & 3);
3. eliminating the current six-year term limit for State Interagency Birth-to-Three Coordination Council members representing participating state agencies (§ 4);
4. eliminating an Early Childhood Cabinet annual reporting requirement on state agencies’ progress made on tasks specified in the federal Head Start Act (§ 5);
5. reducing, from multiple to one, the number of local or regional governance partners in each community that may help provide early care and education under Early Start CT (§ 5);
6. extending by two years, from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2027, the date by which OEC must establish a sliding fee scale for families enrolled in programs under Early Start CT (§ 6); and
7. modifying Early Start CT’s state allocation by allowing the commissioner, within available appropriations, to allocate an

amount she determines for each local or regional governance partner (§ 8).

The bill also makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 1 — DESIGNATED QUALIFIED STAFF MEMBER REQUIREMENTS

Existing law requires primary classroom teachers at OEC-funded early childhood education programs to meet certain education requirements that phase in from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2035. It also specifies the degrees or credentials required for these teachers to qualify as “designated qualified staff members” (i.e. the person assigned primary responsibility for a classroom of children in an early care and education program). A teacher may qualify as a designated qualified staff member at a bachelor’s degree level or an associate’s degree level.

The bill modifies designated qualified staff member education and supervision requirements as described below.

Bachelor’s Degree-Designated Qualified Staff Member

Under current law, a person may qualify as a bachelor’s degree-designated qualified staff member by meeting one of several criteria, such as having a (1) bachelor’s degree or higher with an early childhood concentration or (2) State Board of Education-issued teaching certificate with an early childhood education or special education endorsement.

Another way a person may currently qualify, with OEC’s permission, is if he or she is enrolled in a higher education institution and engaged and making progress in an early childhood planned program of study leading to an early childhood bachelor’s degree. The bill further requires that the person be supervised by an on-site staff teacher or administrator who has a bachelor’s degree or higher with an early childhood concentration.

Associate’s Degree-Designated Qualified Staff Member

Under current law, when a bachelor’s degree-designated qualified staff member is not assigned, an associate’s degree-designated qualified

staff member meeting certain education requirements may generally be deemed a designated qualified staff member if they are supervised on-site by a bachelor's degree-designated qualified staff member.

The bill instead requires that these qualified staff members be supervised by an on-site staff teacher or administrator who has a bachelor's degree or higher with a concentration in early childhood education.

The bill also eliminates a provision under current law that allows a bachelor's degree-designated qualified staff member to supervise an associate's degree-designated staff member off-site. But it continues to allow off-site supervision if the associate's degree-designated staff member works at a family child care home. In this case, the associate's degree-designated staff member may be supervised off-site if (2) they are working toward an early childhood associate's degree or higher and (2) the supervisor meets the requirements for a bachelor's degree-designated qualified staff member and provides coaching at the family child care home.

Phase-In of Requirements

Current law phases in the designated qualified staff member requirements from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2030. Specifically, at least 25% of staff members with primary responsibility for a classroom at each OEC-funded early care and education program must be bachelor's level designated qualified staff members. This requirement increases to (1) 50% from July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2030, and (2) 60% starting July 1, 2030.

Under existing law and the bill, if the OEC-funded early care and education program is a family child care home, the designated qualified staff member for the home must have achieved, or be working toward, an early childhood education associate's degree or higher. But starting July 1, 2035, the bill requires these designated qualified staff members to have such a degree.

As under existing law, these requirements apply to programs that accept state funds directly from OEC or indirectly through OEC

subcontractors, for any combination of infant, toddler, preschool, and before and after school care programs, but does not include Care 4 Kids subsidies.

§§ 2 & 3 — YOUTH CAMPS

By law, youth camps must obtain an annual license from OEC. The bill specifies that (1) these licenses are not transferable and (2) when renewing a license, youth camps must apply to OEC, in addition to paying the renewal fees required under existing law. (Currently, the fees are \$815 for for-profit camps, \$315 for nonprofit camps, and no fee for certain nonprofit day camps that operate for less than six days.)

Additionally, the bill makes technical changes to related statutory definitions.

§ 4 — STATE INTERAGENCY BIRTH-TO-THREE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Under current law, members appointed to the State Interagency Birth-To-Three Coordinating Council may serve up to two consecutive three-year terms. The bill eliminates this term limit for the following council members:

1. the state coordinators of (a) education for homeless children and youth and (b) early childhood special education and
2. members representing each of the participating state agencies (excluding the State Department of Education).

The bill also updates terminology, replacing the term “minority parents” with “parents representing culturally diverse communities” to reflect current OEC policy.

By law, the council helps OEC effectively perform its responsibilities regarding the Birth-To-Three program, including identifying sources of fiscal support for early intervention services and programs, assigning financial responsibility to the appropriate agency, promoting interagency agreements, and preparing applications and amendments required by federal law.

§ 5 — HEAD START PROGRESS REPORT

Existing law requires the Early Childhood Cabinet to annually develop an action plan that assigns the appropriate state agency to complete the tasks specified in the federal Head Start Act (P.L. 110-134).

The bill eliminates a corresponding requirement that the cabinet annually submit a statewide strategic report on the progress state agencies made on these tasks to the governor and Education and Human Services committees. (In practice, this information is already included in OEC's Blue Ribbon five-year strategic plan.)

§§ 6-8 — EARLY START CT

PA 24-78 consolidated the School Readiness Preschool Grant Program, state-contracted child care centers for disadvantaged children, and the state supplemental Head Start grants into one program (Early Start CT), starting in 2026. The bill makes various changes affecting the program's local and regional governance partnerships, sliding fee scale, and state allocation.

Local and Regional Governance Partners

Current law requires local or regional governance partners, within available appropriations, to help provide early care and education in a community under Early Start CT. The bill instead allows only one partner to do so within a community.

Existing law allows (1) a town or school district, and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early care and education in the town or district, to establish a local governance partner and (2) two or more towns or districts, and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early childhood education in a region, to establish a regional governance partner. These partners' membership must reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the community served.

Sliding Fee Scale

The bill extends, from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2027, the date by which OEC must establish a sliding fee scale for families enrolled in an early

care and education program under Early Start CT. By law, the fee scale must be based on family income and consistent with the existing Care 4 Kids fee scale.

Program Allocation

The bill changes the amount OEC may allocate for Early Start CT's coordination, program evaluation, and administration. It authorizes the commissioner to allocate, within available appropriations, an amount she determines for an administrative set-aside for each local or regional governance partner.

Under current law, OEC may allocate the lesser of \$150,000 or up to 10% of the total financial assistance under the contract with each local or regional governance partner for coordination, program evaluation, and administration. The allocated amount must be increased by the lesser of up to \$50,000 or the amount of local funding provided for early childhood education coordination, program evaluation, and administration.

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

sSB 6 (File 199), favorably reported by the Children Committee, subjects municipal youth camps (those serving children ages 3 to 16) to state oversight by requiring them to obtain a license from OEC.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 29 Nay 14 (03/28/2025)