



Substitute Senate Bill No. 137

Public Act No. 26-105

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

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

Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 10-16z of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) There is established the Early Childhood Cabinet. The cabinet shall consist of: (1) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, (3) the Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee, (4) the chancellor of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, or the chancellor's designee, (5) the Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee, (6) the Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's designee, (7) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee, (8) the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity or the executive director's designee, (9) the project director of the Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, (10) a parent or guardian of a child who attends or attended a school readiness program appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, (11) a representative of

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a local provider of early childhood education appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, (12) a representative of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, (13) a representative of a state-funded child care center appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (14) two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of a board of education for a town designated as an alliance district, as defined in section 10-262u, and one of whom is a parent who has a child attending a school in an educational reform district, as defined in section 10-262u, (15) two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of an association of early education and child care providers and one of whom is a representative of a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program, (16) [~~ten~~ eleven] appointed by the Governor, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association, one of whom is a representative of the business community in this state, one of whom is a representative of the philanthropic community in this state, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut State Employees Association, one of whom is an administrator of the child care development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, one of whom is responsible for administering grants received under Section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1419, as amended from time to time, one of whom is responsible for administering the provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC 6301 et seq., one of whom is responsible for coordinating education services to children and youth who are homeless, one of whom is a licensed family child care home provider and a member of a staffed family child care network identified by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, [~~and~~] one of whom is a parent recommended by a parent advisory group that has been appointed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, and a physician licensed pursuant to chapter 370, who is a pediatrician, (17) the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's

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designee, (18) the Lieutenant Governor, or the Lieutenant Governor's designee, (19) the Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee, (20) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the commissioner's designee, and (21) the executive director of the Connecticut Library Consortium, or a cooperating library service unit as defined in section 11-9e, or the executive director's designee.

Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 10-506 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall design and administer the Connecticut Smart Start competitive grant program to provide grants to local and regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related to establishing or expanding a preschool program under the jurisdiction of the board of education for the town. A local or regional board of education may submit an application to the office, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, and may receive (1) a grant for capital expenses in an amount not to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars per classroom for costs related to the renovation of an existing public school to accommodate the establishment or expansion of a preschool program, and (2) an annual grant for operating expenses (A) in an amount not to exceed [five] six thousand five hundred dollars per child served by such grant, or (B) in an amount not to exceed [seventy-five] ninety-seven thousand five hundred dollars for each preschool classroom. Each local or regional board of education that establishes or expands a preschool program under this section shall be eligible to receive an annual grant for operating expenses for a period of five years, provided such preschool program meets standards established by the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such local or regional board of education may submit an application for renewal of

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such grant to the office.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) For purposes of this section, "licensee" means any person licensed pursuant to section 19a-421 of the general statutes and "youth camp" has the same meaning as provided in section 19a-420 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

(b) Each licensee shall provide written contact information for the licensee's youth camp, including the name, address and telephone number of the youth camp, to the Office of Early Childhood. Each licensee shall verify and update, as appropriate, such contact information.

(c) The Office of Early Childhood shall share, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding or other agreement, any information collected pursuant to subsection (b) of this section with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection for use in an emergency notification system, as defined in section 28-25 of the general statutes, that notifies licensees of an emergency situation in the vicinity of a youth camp that may endanger the safety or welfare of the children at such youth camp. Such emergency situation may include, but need not be limited to, a fire, a criminal act, an emergency or an act of nature such as an earthquake, a tornado, a hurricane or a storm.

Sec. 4. Section 19a-87e of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) The Commissioner of Early Childhood may (1) refuse to license under section 19a-87b, a person to own, conduct, operate or maintain a family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, (2) refuse to approve under section 19a-87b, a person to act as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, or (3) suspend or revoke the license or approval or take any other

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action that may be set forth in regulation that may be adopted pursuant to section 19a-79 if the person who owns, conducts, maintains or operates the family child care home, the person who acts as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home, a person employed in such family child care home in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services or a household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, who is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older and resides therein, has been convicted, in this state or any other state of a felony, as defined in section 53a-25, involving the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force against another person, or has a criminal record in this state or any other state that the commissioner reasonably believes renders the person unsuitable to own, conduct, operate or maintain or be employed by a family child care home, or act as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home, or if such persons or a household member has been convicted in this state or any other state of cruelty to persons under section 53-20, injury or risk of injury to or impairing morals of children under section 53-21, abandonment of children under the age of six years under section 53-23, or any felony where the victim of the felony is a child under eighteen years of age, a violation of section 53a-70b of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 2019, or section 53a-70, 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a, illegal manufacture, distribution, sale, prescription, dispensing or administration under section 21a-277 or 21a-278, or illegal possession under section 21a-279, or if such person, a person who acts as assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home or a person employed in such family child care home in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, either fails to substantially comply with the regulations adopted pursuant to section 19a-87b, or conducts, operates or maintains the home in a manner which endangers the health, safety and welfare of the children receiving child care services. Any refusal of a license or approval pursuant to this section shall be rendered in accordance with the

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provisions of sections 46a-79 to 46a-81, inclusive. Any person whose license or approval has been revoked pursuant to this section shall be ineligible to apply for a license or approval for a period of one year from the effective date of revocation.

(b) When the commissioner intends to suspend or revoke a license or approval or take any other action against a license or approval set forth in regulation adopted pursuant to section 19a-79, the commissioner shall notify the licensee or approved staff member in writing of the commissioner's intended action. The licensee or approved staff member may, if aggrieved by such intended action, make application for a hearing in writing over the licensee's or approved staff member's signature to the commissioner. The licensee or approved staff member shall state in the application in plain language the reasons why the licensee or approved staff member claims to be aggrieved. The application shall be delivered to the commissioner within thirty days of the licensee's or approved staff member's receipt of notification of the intended action. The commissioner shall thereupon hold a hearing within sixty days from receipt of such application and shall, at least ten days prior to the date of such hearing, mail a notice, giving the time and place of the hearing, to the licensee or approved staff member. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to the denial of an initial application for a license or approval under section 19a-87b, provided the commissioner shall notify the applicant of any such denial and the reasons for such denial by mailing written notice to the applicant at the applicant's address shown on the license or approval application.

(c) Any person who applies or is licensed to conduct, operate or maintain a family child care home or approved to act as an assistant or substitute staff member in a family child care home shall notify the commissioner of any conviction or placement on the child abuse and neglect registry, established pursuant to section 17a-101k, of the owner, conductor, operator or maintainer of the family child care home or of

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any household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, who is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older, or any person employed in such family child care home in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, [of a crime which affects the commissioner's discretion under subsection (a) of this section,] immediately upon obtaining knowledge of such conviction or placement on the registry. Failure to comply with the notification requirement of this subsection may result in the suspension or revocation of the license or approval or the taking of any other action against a license or approval set forth in regulation adopted pursuant to section 19a-79 and shall subject the licensee or approved staff member to a civil penalty of not more than one hundred dollars per day for each day after the person obtained knowledge of the conviction or placement on the registry.

(d) It shall be a class A misdemeanor for any person seeking employment in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving family child care home services to make a false written statement regarding prior criminal convictions pursuant to a form bearing notice to the effect that such false statements are punishable, which statement such person does not believe to be true and is intended to mislead the prospective employer.

(e) Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, is operating without a current and valid license or in violation of the regulations adopted under section 19a-87b or in a manner which may pose a potential danger to the health, welfare and safety of a child receiving child care services, may report such information to the Office of Early Childhood. The office shall investigate any report or complaint received pursuant to this subsection. The name of the person making the report or complaint shall not be disclosed unless (1) such person consents to such disclosure, (2) a judicial or administrative proceeding results from such report or

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complaint, or (3) a license action pursuant to subsection (a) of this section results from such report or complaint. All records obtained by the office in connection with any such investigation shall not be subject to the provisions of section 1-210 for a period of thirty days from the date of the petition or other event initiating such investigation, or until such time as the investigation is terminated pursuant to a withdrawal or other informal disposition or until a hearing is convened pursuant to chapter 54, whichever is earlier. A formal statement of charges issued by the office shall be subject to the provisions of section 1-210 from the time that it is served or mailed to the respondent. Records which are otherwise public records shall not be deemed confidential merely because they have been obtained in connection with an investigation under this section.

(f) If the commissioner finds that public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to that effect in his or her order, the commissioner may order summary suspension or summary probation of a license issued under section 19a-87b pending proceedings for revocation or other action. These proceedings shall be promptly instituted and determined.

Sec. 5. Section 10-530 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) As used in this section:

(1) "Child care facility" means a "child care center", "group child care home" or "family child care home" that provides "child care services", each as described in section 19a-77, or any provider of child care services under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749;

(2) "Child care services provider or staff member" means any person who is (A) a licensee, employee, volunteer, [or alternate] staff, program

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staff, assistant, substitute staff member or household member of a child care facility, (B) a family child care provider, or (C) [any other] a person who provides child care services under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 but does not include a person who is providing child care services under the child care subsidy program (i) exclusively to children with whom such person is related, and (ii) without being issued a license to provide child care services by the Office of Early Childhood; [and]

(3) "Family child care provider" means any person who provides child care services under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 (A) in a family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, or (B) in a home not requiring a license pursuant to subdivision (4) of subsection (b) of section 19a-77;

(4) "Licensee" means any person licensed under section 19a-80 or 19a-87b to provide child care services;

(5) "Employee" means any person paid to work for a family child care provider as a substitute staff member or assistant or as staff or program staff in a child care center or group child care home;

(6) "Volunteer" means any person who is not an employee of a child care center or group child care home and whose activities involve the direct care of children or the opportunity for unsupervised access to children;

(7) "Staff" means any person employed by a child care center or group child care home, sixteen years of age or older, who is not responsible for providing direct care of children or does not have unsupervised access to children;

(8) "Program staff" means any person employed by a child care center or group child care home, sixteen years of age or older, responsible for the direct care of children;

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(9) "Assistant" means any person who has been approved pursuant to section 19a-87b to provide child care services in a family child care home;

(10) "Substitute staff member" means any person who has been approved pursuant to section 19a-87b to provide child care services in a family child care home; and

(11) "Household member" means any person, other than the licensee, who is eighteen years of age or older and resides in the family child care home.

(b) The comprehensive background checks required pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b and subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, shall be conducted at least once every five years for each child care services provider or staff member [in accordance with the provisions of 45 CFR 98.43, as amended from time to time] and shall include a national and state criminal history records check conducted in accordance with section 29-17a, a check of the state and national sex offender registries, a check of the state child abuse or neglect registry maintained by the Department of Children and Families pursuant to section 17a-101k, and a check of the child abuse or neglect registry for any other state in which such child care services provider or staff member resided in the previous five years.

(c) Any person who applies for a position at a child care facility in the state shall not be required to submit to such comprehensive background checks if such person (1) is an employee of a child care facility in the state, or has not been separated from employment as a child care services provider or staff member in the state for a period of more than one hundred eighty days, and (2) has successfully completed such comprehensive background checks in the previous five years. Nothing in this section prohibits the Commissioner of Early Childhood from requiring that a person applying for a position as a child care services

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provider or staff member submit to comprehensive background checks more than once during a five-year period.

(d) Any person required to submit to comprehensive background checks pursuant to subsection (c) of section 19a-80, subsection (c) of section 19a-87b and subsection (a) of section 17b-749k, may submit a request, in writing, to the Commissioner of Early Childhood for a waiver of the requirement to submit fingerprints. Such request shall include such person's name and date of birth, and evidence that such person is unable to satisfy such fingerprints requirement due to a medical condition, including, but not limited to, a birth defect, physical deformity, skin condition or psychiatric condition. Upon the granting of a waiver to a person under this subsection, the Office of Early Childhood shall conduct a state criminal history records check of such person by using the name and date of birth that was provided in the request for a waiver by such person.

Sec. 6. Subsection (b) of section 19a-87a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(b) Any person who is licensed to conduct, operate or maintain a child care center or group child care home shall notify the commissioner of any criminal conviction or placement on the child abuse and neglect registry, established pursuant to section 17a-101k, of the owner, conductor, operator or maintainer of the center or home or of any person employed therein in a position connected with the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, immediately upon obtaining knowledge of the conviction or placement on the registry. Failure to comply with the notification requirement may result in the suspension or revocation of the license or the imposition of any action set forth in regulation, and shall subject the licensed person to a civil penalty of not more than one hundred dollars per day for each day after the person obtained knowledge of the conviction or placement on the registry.

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