



General Assembly

Substitute Bill No. 137

February Session, 2026



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:

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2 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu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

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

20 leader of the Senate, (12) a representative of the Connecticut Family
21 Resource Center Alliance appointed by the majority leader of the House
22 of Representatives, (13) a representative of a state-funded child care
23 center appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (14) two
24 appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom
25 is a member of a board of education for a town designated as an alliance
26 district, as defined in section 10-262u, and one of whom is a parent who
27 has a child attending a school in an educational reform district, as
28 defined in section 10-262u, (15) two appointed by the president pro
29 tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of an association
30 of early education and child care providers and one of whom is a
31 representative of a public elementary school with a prekindergarten
32 program, (16) ~~ten~~ eleven appointed by the Governor, one of whom is
33 a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association, one of
34 whom is a representative of the business community in this state, one of
35 whom is a representative of the philanthropic community in this state,
36 one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut State Employees
37 Association, one of whom is an administrator of the child care
38 development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development
39 Block Grant Act of 1990, one of whom is responsible for administering
40 grants received under Section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with
41 Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1419, as amended from time to time,
42 one of whom is responsible for administering the provisions of Title I of
43 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC 6301 et seq., one
44 of whom is responsible for coordinating education services to children
45 and youth who are homeless, one of whom is a licensed family child
46 care home provider and a member of a staffed family child care network
47 identified by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, ~~and~~ one of whom
48 is a parent recommended by a parent advisory group that has been
49 appointed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, and a physician
50 licensed pursuant to chapter 370, who is a pediatrician, (17) the
51 Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's
52 designee, (18) the Lieutenant Governor, or the Lieutenant Governor's
53 designee, (19) the Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's
54 designee, (20) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction

55 Services, or the commissioner's designee, and (21) the executive director
56 of the Connecticut Library Consortium, or a cooperating library service
57 unit as defined in section 11-9e, or the executive director's designee.

58 Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 10-506 of the general statutes is
59 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
60 *2026*):

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

84 Sec. 3. Subdivision (3) of section 19a-420 of the 2026 supplement to
85 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
86 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

87 (3) "Day camp" means any youth camp which is established,
88 conducted or maintained during daylight hours for [at least three days
89 a] (A) three or more hours per day for three or more days per week with
90 the campers [eating and] sleeping at home, [except for one meal per day]
91 or (B) more than one session per day for two or more hours per session
92 if children are permitted to enroll in more than one session per day, but
93 does not include programs operated by a municipal agency;

94 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) For purposes of this
95 section, "licensee" means any person licensed pursuant to section 19a-
96 421 of the general statutes and "youth camp" has the same meaning as
97 provided in section 19a-420 of the general statutes, as amended by this
98 act.

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

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

114 Sec. 5. Section 19a-87e of the general statutes is repealed and the
115 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

116 (a) The Commissioner of Early Childhood may (1) refuse to license
117 under section 19a-87b, a person to own, conduct, operate or maintain a
118 family child care home, as defined in section 19a-77, (2) refuse to

119 approve under section 19a-87b, a person to act as an assistant or
120 substitute staff member in a family child care home, as defined in section
121 19a-77, or (3) suspend or revoke the license or approval or take any other
122 action that may be set forth in regulation that may be adopted pursuant
123 to section 19a-79 if the person who owns, conducts, maintains or
124 operates the family child care home, the person who acts as an assistant
125 or substitute staff member in a family child care home, a person
126 employed in such family child care home in a position connected with
127 the provision of care to a child receiving child care services or a
128 household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b, who
129 is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older and resides therein, has been
130 convicted, in this state or any other state of a felony, as defined in section
131 53a-25, involving the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical
132 force against another person, or has a criminal record in this state or any
133 other state that the commissioner reasonably believes renders the
134 person unsuitable to own, conduct, operate or maintain or be employed
135 by a family child care home, or act as an assistant or substitute staff
136 member in a family child care home, or if such persons or a household
137 member has been convicted in this state or any other state of cruelty to
138 persons under section 53-20, injury or risk of injury to or impairing
139 morals of children under section 53-21, abandonment of children under
140 the age of six years under section 53-23, or any felony where the victim
141 of the felony is a child under eighteen years of age, a violation of section
142 53a-70b of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1,
143 2019, or section 53a-70, 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a,
144 illegal manufacture, distribution, sale, prescription, dispensing or
145 administration under section 21a-277 or 21a-278, or illegal possession
146 under section 21a-279, or if such person, a person who acts as assistant
147 or substitute staff member in a family child care home or a person
148 employed in such family child care home in a position connected with
149 the provision of care to a child receiving child care services, either fails
150 to substantially comply with the regulations adopted pursuant to
151 section 19a-87b, or conducts, operates or maintains the home in a
152 manner which endangers the health, safety and welfare of the children
153 receiving child care services. Any refusal of a license or approval

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

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

180 (c) Any person who applies or is licensed to conduct, operate or
181 maintain a family child care home or approved to act as an assistant or
182 substitute staff member in a family child care home shall notify the
183 commissioner of any conviction or placement on the child abuse and
184 neglect registry, established pursuant to section 17a-101k, of the owner,
185 conductor, operator or maintainer of the family child care home or of
186 any household member, as defined in subsection (c) of section 19a-87b,
187 who is [sixteen] eighteen years of age or older, or any person employed

188 in such family child care home in a position connected with the
189 provision of care to a child receiving child care services, [of a crime
190 which affects the commissioner's discretion under subsection (a) of this
191 section,] immediately upon obtaining knowledge of such conviction or
192 placement on the registry. Failure to comply with the notification
193 requirement of this subsection may result in the suspension or
194 revocation of the license or approval or the taking of any other action
195 against a license or approval set forth in regulation adopted pursuant to
196 section 19a-79 and shall subject the licensee or approved staff member
197 to a civil penalty of not more than one hundred dollars per day for each
198 day after the person obtained knowledge of the conviction or placement
199 on the registry.

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

207 (e) Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a family child
208 care home, as defined in section 19a-77, is operating without a current
209 and valid license or in violation of the regulations adopted under section
210 19a-87b or in a manner which may pose a potential danger to the health,
211 welfare and safety of a child receiving child care services, may report
212 such information to the Office of Early Childhood. The office shall
213 investigate any report or complaint received pursuant to this subsection.
214 The name of the person making the report or complaint shall not be
215 disclosed unless (1) such person consents to such disclosure, (2) a
216 judicial or administrative proceeding results from such report or
217 complaint, or (3) a license action pursuant to subsection (a) of this
218 section results from such report or complaint. All records obtained by
219 the office in connection with any such investigation shall not be subject
220 to the provisions of section 1-210 for a period of thirty days from the
221 date of the petition or other event initiating such investigation, or until

222 such time as the investigation is terminated pursuant to a withdrawal
223 or other informal disposition or until a hearing is convened pursuant to
224 chapter 54, whichever is earlier. A formal statement of charges issued
225 by the office shall be subject to the provisions of section 1-210 from the
226 time that it is served or mailed to the respondent. Records which are
227 otherwise public records shall not be deemed confidential merely
228 because they have been obtained in connection with an investigation
229 under this section.

230 (f) If the commissioner finds that public health, safety or welfare
231 imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to
232 that effect in his or her order, the commissioner may order summary
233 suspension or summary probation of a license issued under section 19a-
234 87b pending proceedings for revocation or other action. These
235 proceedings shall be promptly instituted and determined.

236 Sec. 6. Section 10-530 of the general statutes is repealed and the
237 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

238 (a) As used in this section:

239 (1) "Child care facility" means a "child care center", "group child care
240 home" or "family child care home" that provides "child care services",
241 each as described in section 19a-77, or any provider of child care services
242 under the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section
243 17b-749;

244 (2) "Child care services provider or staff member" means any person
245 who is (A) a licensee, employee, volunteer, [or alternate] staff, program
246 staff, assistant, substitute staff member or household member of a child
247 care facility, (B) a family child care provider, or (C) [any other] a person
248 who provides child care services under the child care subsidy program
249 established pursuant to section 17b-749 but does not include a person
250 who is providing child care services under the child care subsidy
251 program (i) exclusively to children with whom such person is related,
252 and (ii) without being issued a license to provide child care services by
253 the Office of Early Childhood; [and]

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

259 (4) "Licensee" means any person licensed under section 19a-80 or 19a-
260 87b to provide child care services;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

318 using the name and date of birth that was provided in the request for a
319 waiver by such person.

320 Sec. 7. Subsection (b) of section 19a-87a of the general statutes is
321 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
322 *2026*):

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

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-16z(a)
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-506(a)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-420(3)
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-87e
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-530
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	19a-87a(b)

ED Joint Favorable Subst.