

**Testimony of Elena Trueworthy, Interim Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood
Before the Finance and Revenue General Obligation Bonding Sub-Committee
Tuesday, March 18, 2026**

Good morning, Senator Miller, Representative Napoli, Senator Hwang, Representative Piscopo and distinguished members of the Finance and Revenue General Obligation Bonding Sub-Committee. I am Elena Trueworthy, Interim Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am testifying concerning unallocated bond funds for child care facilities construction and renovation. Below are responses to the Bonding Subcommittee questions.

1. Are the pending FY 27 authorizations still necessary?

OEC has two unallocated bond balances for facilities construction and renovation of early care and education programs. The unallocated \$11.5 million is the first allocation of a 7-year bond authorization totaling \$80 million for construction and renovation of child care facilities, including infant and toddler care, pursuant to P.A. 25-174. The \$45 million under CGS § 10-508 is targeted to capital construction and renovation of state-funded facilities, which includes Early Start CT and Smart Start.

Early Start CT is the state's major state-funded early care and education program, which combined School Readiness, Child Day Care, and State Head Start under one program. Smart Start Smart Start serves 3- and 4-year-old children in public school settings. It provides local and regional boards of education with funding to operate a preschool program under the jurisdiction of the board of education for the town.

The pending FY27 authorizations are essential to meeting the state's multi-year goal of adding 16,000 new child care slots by 2032. The new authorizations in P.A. 25-174 (Sec. 121-122) and CGS § 10-508 allow the OEC to fund preschool and infant and toddler expansions across all provider types, including community-based centers, family child care homes, and public schools.

1. If so, is the authorization level adequate to complete the project or continue the program through FY 27, as applicable?

The current authorization level, which includes a yearly \$11.5 million cap in P.A. 25-174, is adequate. This structure allows the OEC to pipeline and manage renovation and construction projects that may span 18–24 months, ensuring funds are available when a project breaks ground.

Simultaneously, the OEC is collaborating with other state agencies to leverage funding opportunities, coordinate the inclusion of child care programs with other community development projects where appropriate, and assess the viability of state-owned properties for child care programs.

2. For programs with unallocated balances:

1. Does your agency need the unallocated balance?

Yes. The agency requires the full unallocated balance to fulfill the long-term expansion strategy.

i. If so, for what purpose?

Renovation and new construction of child care facilities.

ii. Within what time frame?

The funds will be deployed through FY 27–FY 32, aligned with the long-term expansion strategy.

2. Are the unallocated funds obligated, designated, or otherwise attached to projects, or are funds available for future needs as they arise?

The unallocated balance of \$45 million and the new FY26 authorization of \$11.5 million are designated for the next phases facilities expansion through construction and renovation.

i. If attached to projects, please provide information on the projects.

The combined \$56.5 million in unallocated and newly effective funds is designated for upcoming Request for Applications (RFA) cycles. These cycles target new construction/renovation for facility build-outs and minor capital/safety upgrades for immediate licensing and zoning compliance.

3. Allocation of funds

1. Were recent allocations to specific purposes (e.g., a specific project or projects, or grant awardee(s)) or generally to the program?

The most recent allocation of \$10 million has been directed to two grant programs – one for the LISC contract, and one administered by OEC to address safety and security projects to bring child care facilities into compliance with licensing and / or zoning regulations.

i. **If generally allocated to the program, briefly describe the process for determining uses and the ultimate recipients or uses of the funds.**

Both LISC and OEC are using a competitive scoring rubric to determine recipients. The ultimate recipients are a mix of licensed centers and family child care providers with preference to applicants who meet NAEYC/NAFCC quality standards.

4. Have changes to federal programs and/or policies impacted your agency’s bond-funded programs?

The OEC is not aware of any impact on our agency’s bond-funded programs.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue, which seeks to expand access to safe, high-quality child care opportunities for Connecticut families. 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.