

My name is Sonja Raymond, and I am the Executive Director of the Vermont Association for The Education of Young Children as well as the owner of Apple Tree Learning Centers in Stowe. I'm here to talk today about section 19 of S. 261, which requires employees of registered and licensed family child care homes and center-based child care and preschool programs to receive training on the use of trauma-informed practices that build resiliency among enrolled children and students: family child care providers, family child care assistants, administrators, teachers, teacher associates, teacher assistants, and classroom aides.

I want to start by saying that I agree with the importance of having trainings on trauma-informed practices. What I want to be sure is that we are thoughtful about how and when this is implemented.

- A new professional development system has just launched. Why are we doing this outside of that system?
- New licensing regulations just came into affect a little over a year ago, which significantly increased required trainings.
- The new system is already struggling financially to provide the trainings required in the new licensing regulations. Where will we get the funds to add this specific type of training?
- What specifically is meant by training (number of hours, frequency, etc.)?
- Currently, staff struggle to find the trainings required of them in close proximity and on an evening or weekend. How will we have access to these additional trainings?
- If you are a Special Services Provider, you are required to have 6 hours per year of similar training. Will this count?

As I stated before, I support the need for ACES training. My center's teachers and assistants need this in order to better serve the population we work with. We have many families and children that have high ACES scores and are struggling significantly. I can tell you from my work with Vtaeyc, every other program in Vermont does too. Our staff, like staff in every program, crave trainings on this topic and additional supports to better help them meet these needs.

However, the challenges I outlined specific to staff training requirements coupled with the significant increase in required staff qualifications are very real for programs. Numerous programs have had such difficulty meeting the current new set of regulations, that they have had to close sections of their program or close their doors. What I am suggesting is that rather than mandating additional specific trainings, we keep this as optional and work with the state and the new professional development system to ensure that these types of trainings can be offered to all that want them in every region.

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