

TO: Matthew Birong and members of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs

FROM: Dr. Kaitlin Northey, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Vermont

DATE: April 29, 2026

RE: S. 206, the “Early Childhood Educator Profession Bill”

Additional Materials:

---

Good morning, I’m Dr. Kaitlin Northey, and I’m an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Vermont. The views and statements I offer today are my own. They do not represent the positions or opinions of the University of Vermont.

Today I am joining one of our University of Vermont (UVM) undergraduate students, Alora Zargo, who will be describing her preparation pathway. Alora’s experiences demonstrate how an intentionally aligned preparation system creates more efficient degree pathways for students.

In our state, four institutions of higher education (Champlain College, Saint Michael’s College, University of Vermont, Vermont State University) provide five Early Childhood Education bachelor’s degree programs. Each program is accredited to prepare educators to teach young children, with slight variations regarding the specific Agency of Education (AoE) licensure endorsements educators can earn.

For example, at the University of Vermont, our undergraduate Early Childhood majors earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood. Upon program completion and graduation, UVM recommends these graduates for an AoE teaching license with a birth through grade three endorsement.

**To earn our recommendation for AoE licensure, our UVM students must:**

- Demonstrate core competencies (through Praxis I exam or other approved equivalents),
- Complete all required coursework to earn bachelor’s degree and gain the general education, pedagogical, and methods knowledge needed to teach young children
  - Cumulative 3.00 GPA and a 3.00 GPA in major
- Complete required field experience hours including a student teaching internship
  - Must earn a grade of B or better in internship
  - At UVM students must also score mostly 4 or higher on our Dispositions Rubric
- Graduate
- **In addition (these are required to be recommended for licensure, not in order to graduate):**
  - Earn a passing score on the Vermont Licensure Portfolio
  - Earn a qualifying score on the content assessment (Praxis II exam 5025)

Once UVM recommends a graduate for AoE licensure, and they can begin the process - completing an application for AoE licensure and getting their fingerprints taken.

I outline these steps to show the differences between someone graduating with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood and the two additional requirements a graduate complete for AoE teacher licensure. These two additional requirements can prove to be a burden for some students. Research has found that standardized assessments can present additional challenges or barriers to becoming a state education agency/department licensed teacher (e.g., IOM & NRC, 2015; McLean et al., 2021; Souto-Manning et al., 2020). In higher education, we have also seen that for some students, successfully completing the Teacher Licensure Portfolio is a challenge that can result in them earning a degree, but not an AoE teaching license. The coursework experienced by students in our Early Childhood bachelor's degree program is the same, whether students choose to become AoE licensed teachers with birth through third grade endorsement or not. At UVM, our coursework is aligned with the [Vermont Core Teaching Standards](#), [InTASC Standards](#), NAEYC [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#), and others (e.g., [New England Commission of Higher Education](#)), all of which inform our curriculum, program and institution accreditation, and our continuous improvement to ensure we are preparing graduates with the knowledge and skills to support children's learning and development.

**I am a strong supporter of the AoE's teacher licensure system and I believe it is meeting the needs of public schools, but it is currently only serving a subset of the early childhood workforce.** Vermont's youngest children and their families are served by a variety of early childhood care and education settings outside of public schools. The current regulatory system for child care regulates programs, not people. This limits our ability to hold individuals accountable for unprofessional conduct and to signal to the public that someone should not work with children.

As the proposed licensure system covers individuals who are not currently served by existing systems, none of the licensure categories are duplicative to what exists now. Additionally, the system proposed in S. 206 will complement existing regulatory systems (e.g., child care programs, AoE teacher licensure endorsements).

- For example, nurses are licensed and regulated through OPR but a nurse can choose to receive an additional licensure endorsement through the Agency of Education to become a public-school nurse. In early childhood, we currently have a regulatory system for public school educators, but not the broader workforce who work in non-public settings.

We know that young children, families, and society benefit from having early childhood educators with the competencies and expertise needed to support their learning and development. S. 206 will address gaps in our existing regulatory systems that leave children, families, programs, and the workforce vulnerable to harm. It will also help ensure that Early Childhood educators have the knowledge and expertise needed to work with young children; improving the qualifications of the child care workforce directly influences children's preparation for later schooling and can help improve our public K-12 education system.

### References

- Institutes of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying framework*. The National Academies Press.
- McLean, C., Austin, L., Whitebook, M., Olson, K. (2021). *Early childhood workforce index-2020*. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.  
<https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf>

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

533 Waterman Building, 85 South Prospect Street, Burlington, VT 05405-0160  
(802) 656-3356

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

Souto-Manning, M., Buffalo, G., & Rabadi-Raol, A. (2020). Early childhood teacher certification as a site for the re-production of racial and cultural injustice. In S. Kessler & B. B. Swadener (Eds.), *Educating for social justice in early childhood*, (pp. 46-57). Routledge.

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

533 Waterman Building, 85 South Prospect Street, Burlington, VT 05405-0160  
(802) 656-3356

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer