

April 29, 2026

Dear House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs,

Greetings! My name is Lynne Robbins. I have worked in the early childhood field for approximately 40 years, 36 of those in Vermont. I worked for the Vermont Child Development Division from approximately 2010 until I retired at the end of July in 2025. My most recent position was as an Early Childhood and Afterschool Systems Specialist, focused primarily on the Vermont early childhood and afterschool professional development system and was in that position approximately 13 years. Prior to that, I was a Child Care Licensing Field Specialist and I visited many regulated child care centers and family child care homes across northern Vermont in that capacity. I am here to share a perspective based on my experience.

I have been following the progress of the work that led to the creation of S. 206 as well as some of the testimony that has been offered. I enthusiastically support the creation of the Early Childhood Profession in Vermont and am excited to see that it has come along as far as it has.

And while I do support the need for this legislation and recognize all of the work that has happened thus far, I still have questions that I am not sure have been answered in relation to setting up this new system. I bring these thoughts up to the Committee in case any additional information is needed before passage.

- Communication:

There is a need to ensure that outreach about this legislation has reached a broad and representative portion of the approximately 8,000 individuals in the early childhood workforce. This includes consideration of whether communications have effectively reached center-based staff who may not receive direct mailings, and whether outreach efforts have extended beyond existing mailing lists to engage those not already connected to the early childhood system. It is also important to ensure that opportunities for feedback have been widely accessible across different settings and roles. The Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (or Vermont AEYC) has done significant work to engage the workforce. Previous testimony stated that over 1,000 individuals have participated in various outreach efforts, which is statistically more than a representative number and significant. However, from my most recent position with the state, using a full mailing list of all regulated programs in the state, it was still not possible to reach individuals who are staff, employed at a regulated child care center unless a program director shared that information with them.

- Workforce qualifications

Consideration should be given to the number of currently employed staff in centers and family child care programs who may need to increase their

qualifications to maintain their positions. Based on the most recent Child Development Division workforce data, there may be a significant number of individuals—potentially at least 525—who are currently qualified as staff able to lead a group of children but would not meet new requirements to maintain that position. It will be important to ensure these individuals are clearly informed of the changes, understand the expectations, and have the ability to access support if needed to comply with the new requirements. Retention of these educators is a key consideration, as barriers may extend beyond simply having enough time to complete additional education.

I have included a table (separate document) with data taken from the Child Development Division most recent workforce report that shows the (then) current positions held by individuals in the field, and the approximate number of individuals that will need additional coursework to maintain their positions.

- Additional financial considerations

The cost of supporting educators in obtaining additional qualifications is an important factor. Existing supports, such as the Vermont TEACH program and the Vermont Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program administered by the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children, are wonderful programs, with well-evidenced success, but they currently serve a limited number of participants. Meeting the needs of a potentially large group of impacted educators would likely require significant additional investment to ensure access to education, training, and support.

- Incentive

As qualification requirements increase, consideration should be given to whether adequate incentives are in place to support workforce participation and advancement during all phases of implementation. Without an agreement from program directors to ensure compensation and/or benefits will be augmented following educational advancement, educators who attain additional credentials may not see corresponding increases in pay or benefits.

- Family Child Care considerations related to ability to operate

The impact on family child care providers warrants careful consideration. Many providers enter the field to care for their own children and often work extended hours, making it challenging to pursue additional coursework. Ensuring that pathways to professional licensure are accessible and achievable—particularly in rural areas where child care options are limited—will be critical to maintaining supply. While there are legacy considerations included in the legislation, those are due to expire on January 1, 2029.

There may also be value in exploring flexible pathways for entry into the field, potentially aligned with systems such as STARS, that allow individuals to

begin operating at an entry-level qualification while working toward higher credentials over time.

- Language in the bill
 - Careful attention to the language of the bill is important to ensure clarity and avoid unintended consequences. An example is how exemptions are defined. Are family child care programs who offer afterschool-only services also included in the afterschool program exemption, or is that only for programs operating under an afterschool program license? Another example is the timing of licensure requirements. Clear guidance on whether individuals may work while their license or transitional license is under review will be important for programs facing staffing challenges.
 - In addition, coordination between regulatory entities will be important to ensure clarity and consistency in how compliance with licensure requirements is monitored and enforced.

In closing, I want to reiterate that I wholeheartedly support professionalizing the early childhood workforce. It is long overdue, and I have been working towards this for most of my early childhood career. That said, I have had questions about this significant system change that may be important to consider so that we all will have a more complete understanding of the full impact of passing this legislation without losing our capacity to serve children and families. Building Bright Futures testified that the system should ‘*ensure the pipeline of new early educators remains strong and sustainable*’, and I agree. I feel that unless we have considered all of the potential impacts, we may end up compromising our success. This is important for the benefit of the workforce which has been so grossly undervalued for decades, and ultimately important for the benefit of the children and families served. Thank you.