

Testimony Comments Submitted to: House Human Services

Submitted By: Candace Lewis, Dean of Academic Affairs, Community College of Vermont

Subject: S.206 An act relating to licensure of early childhood educators by the Office of Professional Regulation

Date: April 23, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony related to S.206. My name is Candace Lewis. I am the Dean of Academic Affairs for the Community College of Vermont. In my role, I am responsible for academic programming at the College. The purpose of my testimony is to provide information about CCV's role in serving the educational and career development needs of early childhood educators in Vermont.

CCV is the second largest higher education institution in Vermont, serving 10,000 students each year. Our students come from diverse backgrounds and engage with the College in varying ways. Our students lead busy lives; 90% of degree students attend part-time and 74% of degree students have full- or part-time jobs. The average age of our students is 26 years old. Over 50% of students are the first in their families to attend college. CCV continues to be the most affordable college for Vermonters, and we regularly partner with organizations to increase grant and scholarship opportunities and decrease costs for students.

CCV students range from high school students taking their first college course to working professionals with years of experience in their field. To meet the needs of our students, CCV provides programming through various formats including in-person, online, and hybrid course modalities. We provide multiple avenues for Vermonters to earn credit for learning gained outside of the college classroom. Whatever their path, CCV provides all students with individualized academic advising, career development support, and student support services.

From our earliest days, CCV has supported programming for early childhood educators. Enrollment in CCV's early childhood programs is consistently among the highest at the college. During the 2024-2025 academic year, the College enrolled 712 students in early childhood programs.

CCV offers three certificates in early childhood education—the Childcare Certificate, the Early Childhood Education Administrator Certificate, and the Afterschool and Youth Work Certificate. These certificates all stack seamlessly into our Early Childhood Education Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree. Upon completion of the associate degree, CCV students may choose to continue their education through pathways and transfer agreements we have with a range of bachelor's degree programs in Vermont and the Northeast.

Our courses, certificates, and degree program align with the professional standards and competencies of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and provide a stackable pathway to the ECE I and ECE II levels. Certificates provide learners with foundational knowledge in the field and serve as an entry point for further study in the degree program. At the ECE II level, associate degree students develop competency in the areas of child development, family and community, teaching and learning, health and safety, professionalism, and program organization. In addition, degree students complete CCV's 33-credit General Education curriculum, which supports development of critical thinking and a well-rounded educational foundation through broad liberal arts education. Students benefit from significant flexibility in their general education coursework, allowing them to choose courses that benefit their career goals. In a 2023 survey of CCV Early Childhood Education graduates, 100% of those who responded that they felt prepared or well prepared in the areas of emphasis in the general education curriculum.

CCV recognizes that many early childhood educators come to the College with extensive work experience in the field. Through the Vermont State Colleges Office of Prior Learning Assessment, we support students to gain credit for prior college-level learning attained through professional experience. There are multiple pathways for students to gain credit for prior learning including credit by examination, individual course challenges, and portfolio courses where students work with a faculty member to document their learning for multiple academic courses. Prior Learning Assessment is a popular option for early childhood educators, with students who have experience of at least one year in the field demonstrating great success. In addition, there are multiple scholarships and grants available to support early childhood education students through these programs. Since 2017, early childhood educators have accounted for approximately 50% of the students served in the program. The most frequently accessed option for early childhood educators is course challenge/competency-based pathways, where they see a success rate of more than 97%. In portfolio courses, early childhood educators see a credit award rate equal to other professions: 12.6-credit average in Focused Portfolio Development and 30-credit average in Assessment of Prior Learning. Since 2020, nearly 150 early childhood educators have received 2,811 college credits from portfolio courses. These awards resulted in an average of \$5,000 in tuition savings and 250 hours of time saved per student.

We also recognize that current and aspiring professionals benefit from guidance navigating professional requirements. CCV supports the career and professional development of early childhood educators through our program Northern Lights at CCV. This program, which is funded by the Child Development Division of Vermont's Department for Children and Families, operates as the hub of the professional development system for Vermont's Early Childhood and Afterschool Workforce. Northern Lights provides professional development training and communities of practice, individualized career advising, and support for the State's workforce registry. The Northern Lights Resource Advisors, who offer career advising to all professionals in Vermont's early childhood and afterschool workforce, have deep knowledge of and experience in Vermont's systems. In 2025 alone, they provided over 1,800 career advising consultations to professionals working in the field.

Our mission is to support and challenge students in meeting their educational and career goals through our belief in the transformative power of education to change lives. The Community College of Vermont is deeply committed to continued support of the early childhood education workforce and

helping our students meet the current or future education and professional development requirements to work in Vermont's early education settings.

Sincerely,

Candace Lewis

Candace Lewis
Dean of Academic Affairs
Community College of Vermont