

04/09/2025

Dear Senate Committee on Government Operations regarding S.119,

Registered Family Childcare Homes are personal and professional Early Childhood Educators (ECE). We work long hours alone. Sometimes there are emergencies with families that require us to work even longer. Most of us can recite the birthday of any child in our program as we build relationships with the families in our charge not only daily during business hours, also after hours. We attend family functions from baby showers to weddings for the families we care for. As one FCCH colleague said, “my daughter was just in the wedding of a child I cared for years ago”. Another mentioned, “I have a child with Albinism, so I took it upon myself to learn how to best support his learning and development”. A third colleague said, “Even on closed days I often celebrate holidays with former and current families”. This is a close knit community serving the children and families enrolled. We rely on networking with other FCCH colleagues to prevent burnout, practice self-care and educate ourselves on many different topics while also taking professional development hours, working full-time and caring for our own families.

After meeting with several colleagues who are opposed to the S.119 Bill as it is written we collaborated to find what we believe to be a compromised solution. Ideas that we feel would be attainable while continuing to run our family childcare homes (FCCH). We want to start by sharing what agencies we currently work with to run a registered home childcare. Please view the highlighted links included to get an understanding of what is required of a family childcare home at a minimum as well as highlighted links for those of us that do more than the required regulations.

Registered Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) are licensed with the State of Vermont Department of Children and Families, Child Development Division. The CDD minimum requirements are 108 pages of [Child Care Licensing Regulations](#) with an accompanying 133 page [FCCH Guidance Manual](#) to help define and understand these regulations. We are often in contact with the State of Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) to ensure children’s subsidy certificates are up to date, and every two weeks we must input attendance into the Child Development Division Information System (CDDIS) in order receive tuition payments from CCFAP. That attendance must be recorded daily for

every child so licensing may view it during their random unannounced compliance inspections using the [licensing visit checklist](#) which is checking the health and safety of every program as well as looking to see if the owner of the FCCH has met the minimum annual professional development and their [FCCH Due Dates](#). We use the [Northern Lights Career Ladder](#) through [Northern Lights at CCV](#) (NL@CCV) for professional development educational opportunities as well as growth in each of the [first six core knowledge levels](#) which require a combination of completed education, professional experience with children and families, and a current Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). The IPDP we create is accessible through our Quality Credential Account in the [Bright Futures Information System \(BFIS\)](#). The IPDP should align with our professional development and growth and must be updated annually. Once a professional development certificate is received, we send it to NL@CCV where they will input that information into our BFIS professional development record. BFIS is a public portal for anyone to view or regulatory history. In addition to the minimum, many of us participate in the [Vermont Step Ahead Recognition System](#) (STARS) which must be done in connection with the [System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports \(SPARQS\)](#) which is funded by the CDD and administered by the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC). It requires us to apply through SPARQS to have a CLASS Assessment where a program assessor comes into the program to observe and record the teacher interacting with the children. Depending on the STAR level applying for this can be a scored or unscored then the observation is sent to the early educator to create a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQI). This plan is very similar to the BFIS IPDP. There are many of us that participate in the [Child and Adult Food Program \(CACFP\)](#) that ensures we provide nutritious meals and snacks. This agency visits each participating FCCH three times a year with at least one visit to observe a meal provided for children. A good deal of our work is paperwork and often it overlaps and is excessive.

In addition to the above, many FCCH programs invite Community Members to visit the FCCH. This ranges from Starts with the Arts, Book Mobiles, Librarians, Police, Fire, and EMS as well as Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists working with a specific child. We invite the latter in to educate ourselves in helping that child. All these community members see and observe our interactions with children.

According to BFIS there are 403 FCCH professionals regulated by the CDD. Of those 403 FCCH, 204 are 3 STAR and above. The STAR rating is much like that of a hotel. 1 STAR meets minimum regulations while a 5 STAR meets and exceeds beyond the minimum. This

reflects the fact that many of us have already chosen to take our profession to an elevated level with an increased workload and to reflect our goals and progress in our teaching practices.

While a standard associates degree typically takes two years to complete, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recognizes that it can take early childhood educators working full-time six to eight years to complete, citing the demands of their jobs and personal circumstances.

With this in mind, we propose the following Alternate Pathways for FCCH to Senate Bill S.119 - Making Early Childhood Education a Recognized Profession

To be an ECE Level II of the Bill...

FCCH to be grandfathered if they have experience in the ECE profession for 5 years, AND has ONE of the following

a.) 1 STAR or 2 STAR(s) AND takes 30 hours of professional development annually meeting the following...

- Planning and implementing intentional, developmentally appropriate learning experiences that promote the social emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development and health of each child served

- Establishing and maintaining a safe, caring, inclusive, and healthy learning environment

- Observing, documenting, and assessing children's learning and development

- Developing reciprocal, culturally responsive relationships with families and communities

- Engaging in reflective practice and continuous learning

OR

b.) are already at a 3 STAR level or above (3 STAR is the minimum required level to be a [Specialized Care Program](#). Only Specialized Care Programs can serve three distinct populations, Families with open cases with DCF's Family Services — *Protective Services Child Care*. Families experiencing significant stress — *Family Support Child Care*. Children with special needs — *Child with Special Health Needs Child Care* and is a continuum of services offered through [Children's Integrated Services](#)).

OR

c.) FCCH is already at level 3B on the NL Career Ladder

We ask that the transition period for those in FCCH pursuing an Associate Degree specifically in ECE be a six-to-eight-year timeline.

We believe these ideas to be a fair compromise to the Bill being solely and strictly about a degree. We believe experience as well as education play a vital role, and that education can be achieved in different manners and experience should count for the many of us that have invested years in our profession. Fifteen hours of professional development in the CDD regulations are required annually. We recommend grandfathering for those with five years or more of experience working in ECE as that means we have earned at least 75 hours of continued education and worked weekly 50 - 60 hours in experience. An associate degree is typically only 60 credit hours of full-time academic work. Furthermore, The State of Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) recognizes a teacher of the year for the entire state annually and recently awarded that recognition to a teacher who has worked for only 6 years in education. In a city school system after 5 years a teacher is vested into the city pension which means after their 5 years of service, they have earned the right to ownership of their pension. Community Action agencies that work with DCF like BROCC Community Action recognize their employees after 5 years of service. On [the NL Early Childhood Career Ladder](#) a level one needs one year of experience and for a level two – level six, two years of experience. We feel after 5 years of working in this profession we've proven that we are established, capable professionals. We respectfully ask these be on the Bill so there is no confusion as to which FCCH professionals qualify under the Office of Professional Regulation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Heather Armell – FCCH Monkton

Misty Scott – FCCH Vergennes

Penny Blanchette-Lucia – FCCH St. George

Evelyn Burlock – FCCH Vergennes

Lyndsay Donahue – FCCH Rutland

Renee Durochia – FCCH Hinesburg

Penny Howes – FCCH Waterbury

Sherrie James – FCCH Waterbury Center

Jeanine Wixson – FCCH Barre City

(Collectively 263 years of experience)