

Public Comment Submitted to: Senate Government Operations

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Subject: S.119, Early Childhood Educators as a Profession

Date: April 10, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on S.119, an act relating to the licensure of early childhood educators. I understand that there have been several questions about educational opportunities for professionals as related to the proposed legislation. Given the Community College of Vermont's (CCV) role in serving Vermont's early childhood and afterschool professionals, we felt it may be useful to provide information about the array of programs and supports we offer students at CCV.

Serving Vermont's early childhood educators has been an important part of the CCV's work for decades. Child Development was among the first courses offered at CCV in the early 1970s. Today, we serve nearly 500 students each semester in our Early Childhood Education (ECE) associate degree and three early childhood education certificate programs. CCV also supports the career and professional development of early childhood educators in the state 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.

At CCV, we believe in the power of education to transform lives, inspire families, and strengthen communities. In our work with current and aspiring early childhood educators, we see these values reaffirmed as students translate the knowledge, skills, and practice they gain from courses and trainings to their work in the field as teachers, support specialists, and administrators. If you look around at the many early care and education settings in Vermont, every day you will see CCV students and graduates playing important roles in the lives of children and families.

CCV prides itself on meeting students where they are in their lives. We offer a range of course modalities and formats including on-ground and online options. We have pathways for earning credit for prior learning and professional experience, opportunities that many of our ECE students capitalize on. We provide robust academic advising and student support services. We work with partner organizations to provide scholarships and grants. We embrace students at all stages of their lives, from secondary education to life-long learning. And we welcome both full and part-time students. This flexibility is critically important for early childhood educators, the majority of whom work in the field while they pursue their education at CCV.

If the proposed system of professional licensure moves forward, CCV is well positioned to support the educational and professional development needs of members of the field. Our courses, certificates, and degree program are aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) professional standards and competencies and provide a stackable pathway that prepares students at the ECE I and ECE II levels. For students who choose to continue their education, we have articulation agreements that provide transfer pathways to a range of bachelor's degree programs. Our offerings provide both an on-ramp into the field and a clear path for professional growth and development throughout one's career.

CCV also supports students to gain credit for prior learning and professional experience through the Vermont State Colleges Office of Prior Learning Assessment. In the Office of Prior Learning Assessment, we help non-traditional learners describe and document their learning for college credit. Since 2017, early childhood educators have accounted for approximately 50% of the students we serve in the program. These students are most likely to access our course challenge/competency based pathway options, where they see a success rate of more than 90%. In our portfolio courses, early childhood educators see a credit award rate equal to other professions: 12-credit average in Focused Portfolio Development and 30-credit average in Assessment of Prior Learning. Prior learning assessment is an existing option that supports early childhood educators so they can save time and money as they reach their academic and professional goals.

We also recognize that current and aspiring professionals need support and guidance navigating new professional requirements. CCV's academic advisors are highly skilled at supporting students toward their educational goals through individualized coaching. The Northern Lights Resource Advisors, who offer career advising to all professionals in Vermont's ECE and afterschool workforce, have rich knowledge of and experience in Vermont's ECE systems. For that reason, CCV is uniquely prepared to help support Vermont's early childhood educators as they learn about and understand a new system of professional requirements and create plans for how they will achieve their professional goals.

At the heart of the mission of the Community College of Vermont is a belief that education is a powerful mechanism for opening up possibilities and changing lives. At CCV, we are committed to supporting Vermont's early childhood education workforce and to helping our students meet the current or future education and professional development requirements to work in Vermont's early care and education settings.

Sincerely,

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