

Date: April 9, 2025

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations

Re: Addressing misinformation surrounding S.119, an act relating to the licensure of early childhood educators

From: Sharron Harrington, Executive Director, Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children

CC: Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary of State, Secretary of State's Office
Jen Colin, General Counsel, Office of Professional Regulation, Secretary of State's Office

It has come to the attention of VTAEYC that misinformation is circulating about the impact S.119 would have on our current early childhood education workforce, and that misinformation may be driving the opposition messaging to S.119 received by this committee. VTAEYC welcomes genuine engagement, but is concerned about the impact of misinformation to the progress of S.119 and our workforce in general.

The purpose of this memo is to **1. provide this committee with data that is sound and accurate to counter misinformation in circulation; 2. to provide historic data and methodology; and 3. to inform you of steps VTAEYC is taking to keep our workforce well-informed and well-supported.**

1. Sound and accurate data. We have structured this as counterpoints to the misinformation circulated on social media and in a misleading survey. The misinformation presented in bold is taken from the survey and is what members of the workforce received.

From what we have learned from its recipients, we believe the survey was sent to all registered child care home programs on the VT DCF-CDD public list, processed through an email marketing platform bypassing audience opt-in. VTAEYC advised recipients who contacted us, recognizing it was misinformation, to not engage with the survey.

- ***[False] Registered homes (FCCH) must close if the director does not have an associate degree in early childhood education, or higher.***

Per S.119, nobody would need to close their program because they don't have a degree. Everyone working in a regulated program will receive a transition license so they can keep working. The transition period between 2025-2033 provides flexible opportunities for people to earn qualifications at the pace and process that works for them. Job experience and already accrued professional development hours will count. The transition period also provides an offramp for early childhood educators near retirement.

- ***[False] All early childhood educators will be required to pay up to \$550 in license fees annually.***

OPR proposes the following fees for licensure:

ECE I - Initial \$125; Renewal \$225

ECE II - Initial \$175; Renewal \$250

ECE III - Initial \$225; Renewal \$275

OPR's license schedule renews every two years, not annually.

If someone holds an AOE teacher's license with ECE endorsement, they are exempt from also needing an ECE license to practice from OPR. They would only pay the fee for the AOE license.

- ***[Misleading] Vermont has already lost 180 childcare programs and 1,606 childcare slots since 2018.***

This is old, COVID-era data. It does not reflect changes since major system investment was implemented, including Act 76, Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program, Youth Apprenticeships, credential bonuses, and other programs.

According to data from CDD and First Children's Finance, the trend is the other way: more than 1,000 spaces (600 net) opened since Act 76 passed, and more programs opened than closed in 2024.

- ***[Misleading] All early childhood educators without a certificate in ECE will no longer be allowed to work as staff, even in licensed centers.***

Nobody will be forced to stop working. In the future, early childhood educators will need to meet qualifications in order to be licensed to practice as an ECE I, II, or III. There is a transition period between 2025-2033, and flexible ways to show readiness. Experience and PD will count.

- ***[False] An estimated 33% of current providers could be forced to close under the proposed legislation.***

This data is not sound. The number was generated by a misleading poll that circulated on social media and email based on the misinformation above.

2. Historic data and methodology: The multi-year workforce outreach that led to the recommendations VTAEYC submitted to OPR used appropriate survey methods and collected and analyzed data to ensure fairness and accuracy. The primary reason for this was to ensure the proposed recommendations actually represented the wishes of Vermont's mixed-delivery workforce.

The consensus process has always included space for early childhood educators to name both elements they are excited about, and elements that concern them.

- One estimate shows family child care home ECEs are about 8% of the total child care workforce. In workforce outreach sessions, they were 15-25% of the participants: actually overrepresented compared to their proportion in the overall workforce.
- Intentional broad and targeted outreach led to strong turnout for professional development sessions (2020-2022) and high survey response rates. We viewed what we were hearing as trustworthy feedback. Here are the numbers:

Professional Identity

357 participants from the ECE workforce;
168 of participants responded to the survey (40% response rate)

ECE I, II, III with Aligned Preparation Pathways

318 participants; 203 survey responses (64%)

Professional Compensation

409 participants; 238 survey responses (58%)

Professional Licensure

371 participants; 234 survey responses (63%)

- In the surveys, we heard overwhelming support for each recommendation. Data analysis showed no substantial difference in support between family child care home and center-based early childhood educators.
For example: survey support for ECE I, II, and III was 97% (family child care home) and 98% (center-based). Support for aligned preparation pathways (minimum 120-hour prep program, associate degree, bachelor's degree) was 88% (family child care home) and 90% (center-based).
- Some additional historic outreach data: Between 2019-2022, recommendations were formed through:
 - 146 interactive information sessions
 - 2,500 individual workforce engagement experiences
 - 901 completed surveys
 - Presentations to 20 stakeholder groups
 - 1,200+ comments on draft recommendations
 - Thousands engaged through newsletters

Outreach has continued since 2022, with more than 200 total information sessions and consistent communications. Regular updates are sent to more than 800 early childhood educators and system stakeholders who are most engaged in the initiative. Broad outreach continues to offer onramps and access to people less engaged or not engaged.

3. Steps VTAAYC is taking to keep our workforce well-informed:

Immediately, VTAAYC has reached out to our workforce to offer facts. We provided talking points to workforce leadership, including peer professional network leaders; created a flyer for our workforce with the same misinformation corrections presented above; and we are providing accurate and accessible information to our workforce through our regularly scheduled roundtable updates, newsletters, social media, networks, and other outreach.

In conclusion:

VTAAYC's regularly scheduled April 8, 2025 roundtable update was attended by multiple workforce members who had previously submitted their concerns about S.119 to this committee. We are heartened that so many showed up to learn from a trusted source, and to raise questions and concerns among peers.

One important point: Early childhood educators have always raised concerns about how the new profession would work; especially the transition to the new profession. That has been true even for members of the Task Force and others deeply supportive of this work, and it continues now.

Hearing concerns has been critical to the process. Workforce concerns helped shape recommendations and, since VTAEYC's workforce recommendations were submitted to OPR, we have continued to collect them for OPR and rulemaking. VTAEYC welcomes constructive feedback and engagement in this process from all stakeholders, in all settings, in all roles. It is important to genuine and constructive engagement that all parties have accurate information. Thank you for the opportunity to clarify and to help dispel misinformation.