



Public Comment Submitted to: Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Submitted By: Dr. Leslie C. Johnson, Associate Academic Dean of Education and Behavioral Science, Community College of Vermont

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

Date: February 9, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment as related to S.206, An act relating to licensure of early childhood educators by the Office of Professional Regulation. I understand that there have been several questions about educational opportunities in Vermont for professionals interested in pursuing careers in early childhood education with a particular emphasis on the ECE II level as outlined in the proposed legislation. Given the Community College of Vermont's (CCV) role in the state serving early childhood education professionals and as the only institution granting associate degrees in Early Childhood Education, we felt it may be useful to provide information about the array of programs and supports offered at CCV.

CCV is deeply committed to serving Vermont's early childhood educators through our academic programs, professional development trainings, and career supports. CCV offers three certificates in early childhood education—the Childcare Certificate, the Early Childhood Education Administrator Certificate, and the Afterschool and Youth Work Certificate—that stack seamlessly into our Early Childhood Education Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree. Enrollment in these programs is robust. The Early Childhood Education A.A. is routinely among the top three highest enrolled programs at the College. In the 2024-2025 academic year, we served 614 students in our associate degree program and nearly 100 more students in our early childhood education certificate programs.

Students in these programs benefit from a combination of coursework focused on foundational academic skills and curriculum specialized in early childhood education. 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. At the ECE II level, associate degree students complete CCV's robust 33-credit General Education curriculum, which is designed to support students' development of competency in the areas of communication, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, and technology through exposure to a broad liberal arts education. For early childhood educators, the general education supports the development of critical skills in areas such as written expression, quantitative reasoning, digital and computing literacy, the arts, and

natural sciences that strengthen their work supporting the development of the children in their classrooms. Students benefit from significant choice and flexibility in their general education coursework, allowing them agency 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 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 provide robust academic advising and student support services. We work with partner organizations to provide scholarships and grants. CCV's tuition is the lowest in the Vermont, with many students attending at low or no cost to them. 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. Upon completion of the associate degree, CCV students may choose to continue their education by leveraging our articulation agreements that provide transfer pathways to a range of bachelor's degree programs.

In all of our academic pathways, CCV 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 97%. In our 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 options. These awards resulted in an average of \$5,000 in tuition savings and 250 hours of time saved per student. 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.

CCV further 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 trainings 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 ECE systems. In 2025 alone, they provided over 1,800 career advising consultations to professionals working in the field. For that reason, CCV is uniquely prepared to support Vermont's early childhood educators.

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 with children and families. 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,

Leslie Johnson, Ph.D.
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