

CT Early Childhood Education Endowment

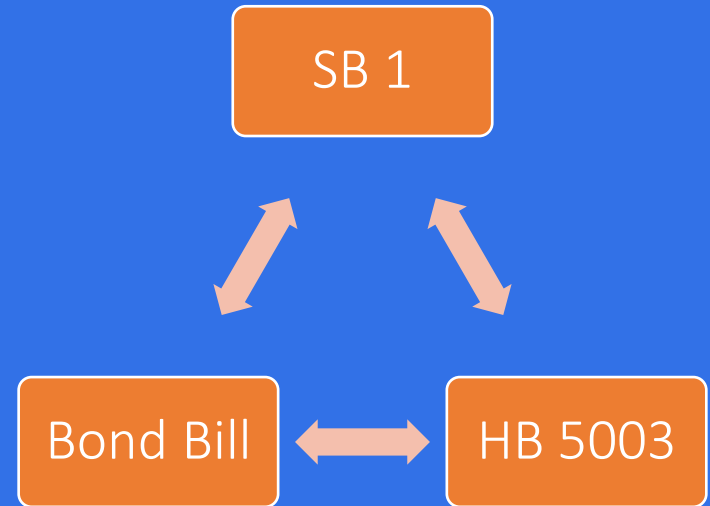
**Advisory Board Meeting
September 19, 2025**



Office of Early Childhood

Setting the Stage

- Builds upon Blue Ribbon Plan and Early Start CT
- Follows Guiding Principles
- Addresses the challenges of the current child care system



What's the Problem?

- Not all children in Connecticut have access to high-quality preschool before kindergarten.
- Parents want their children ready for school but often can't afford high-quality care that aligns with work hours.
- ECE classrooms across the state struggle to find qualified staff, driven by low wages for ECE teachers.
- Lack of access to child care impedes labor force participation of parents.
- District programming for preschoolers with special education needs often has limited hours/days/locations.
- The current system is fragmented, making it challenging for families to navigate.



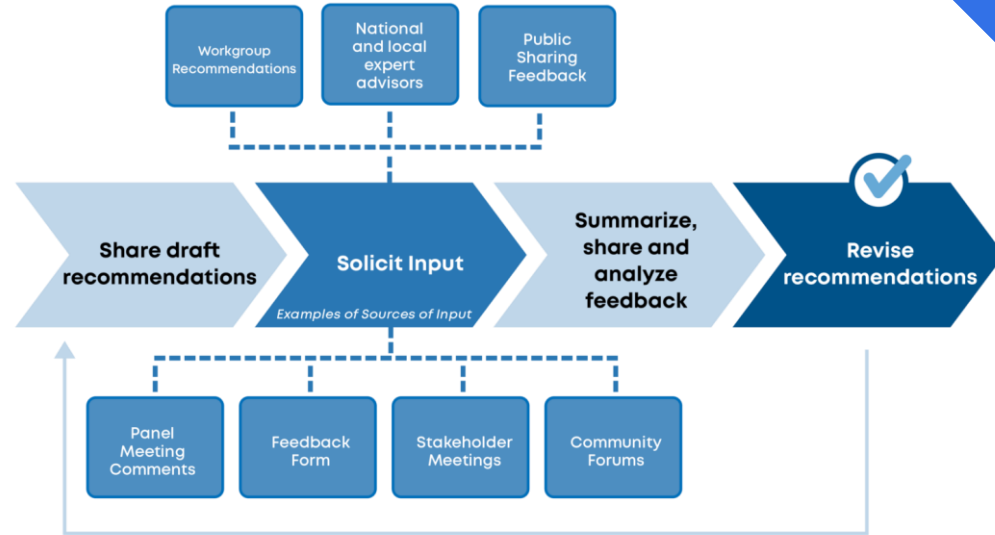
Blue Ribbon Plan on Child Care

Governor Lamont initiated the Blue Ribbon Plan on Child Care by Executive Order in 2023.

The goal was to develop an equitable, high-quality, and sustainable system that **ensures that every child has a quality educational foundation that will prepare them to grow, learn, and succeed.**

The culmination of over a year of work, **the Blue Ribbon Panel's report incorporates extensive feedback** from Blue Ribbon workgroups, national and local experts, Panel members, and other stakeholders, including providers, parents, businesses, and advocates.

Blue Ribbon Panel Feedback Process



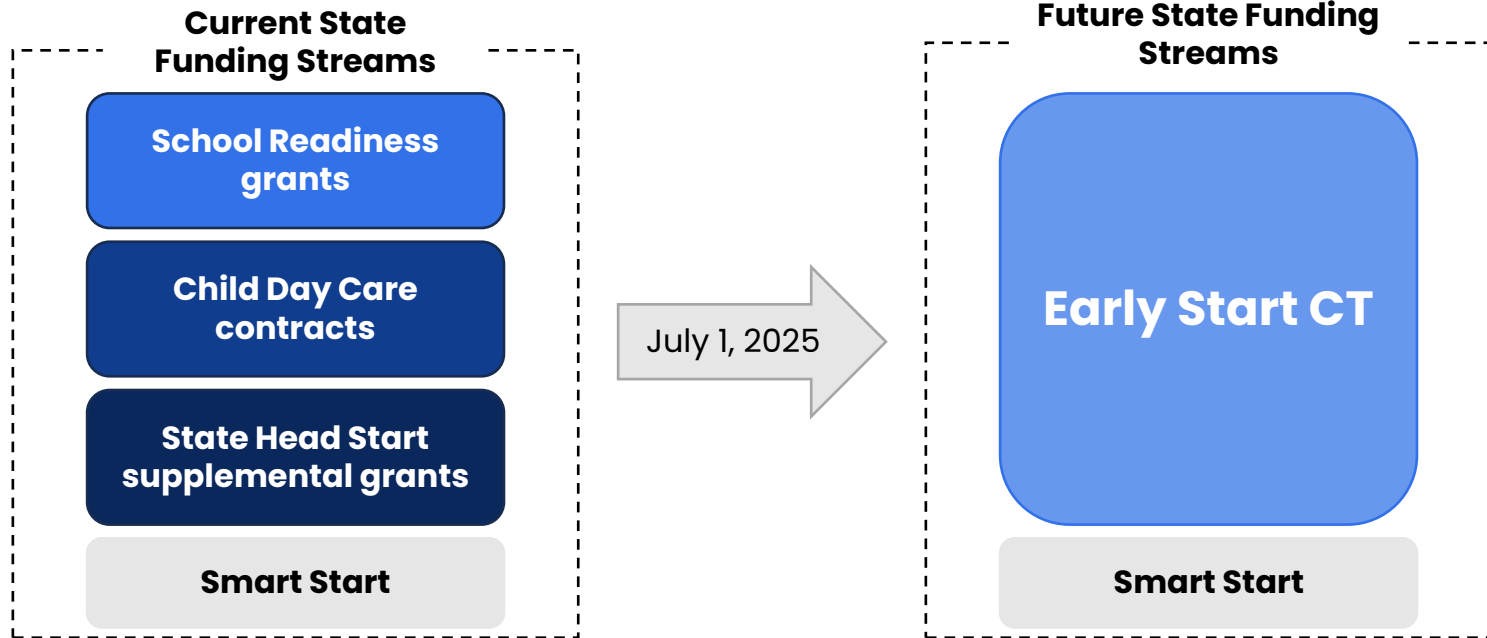
Guiding Principles

- Mixed Delivery – Public Schools, Child Care Centers, Group Child Care Homes & Family Child Care Homes
 - OEC and SDE collaboration
- Common quality standards and ongoing quality improvement
 - Teacher qualifications and Accreditation
 - Coaching for ECE quality and supporting students with Special Ed. Needs (SDE & OEC)
- Assure that infant and toddler child care is supported
- Workforce compensation to increase in alignment with public schools
- Allows time for planning (community planning, facility needs, program alignment)
- Ensures feedback from parents in design
- Collaboration between the House, Senate, Governor's Office, OPM and OEC



What is Early Start CT?

Early Start CT is the new state funding stream that combines the current School Readiness grants, Child Day Care Contracts, and State Head Start supplemental grants; it went into effect July 2025



Improve Affordability, Access, Quality



- **Expand Early Start CT child care options for families beginning July 1, 2027:**
 - free for families making up to \$100,000 per year *
 - 7% of the family's annual income maximum for families making more than \$100,000
- **Increased rates for ECE programs and school districts**
- **A trust fund** approach with sustainable funding and planful expansion
- **Builds on current local, state, federal funds/programs** to fill gaps, and extend the length of the day for working families
- **New Parent Portal** links parents to all Birth-5 Early Start options to best meet their needs. Data to help system expansion planning
- **Improves the whole system** with ECE workforce development, market rates, quality supports, and holds babies harmless



Early Start CT Expansion Features

Affordable or free high-quality child care

Simple, easy to access, and flexible to meet family needs

Fair and data driven with community planning and decision making

Capitalizes on the Blue Ribbon Panel Early Start CT system improvements

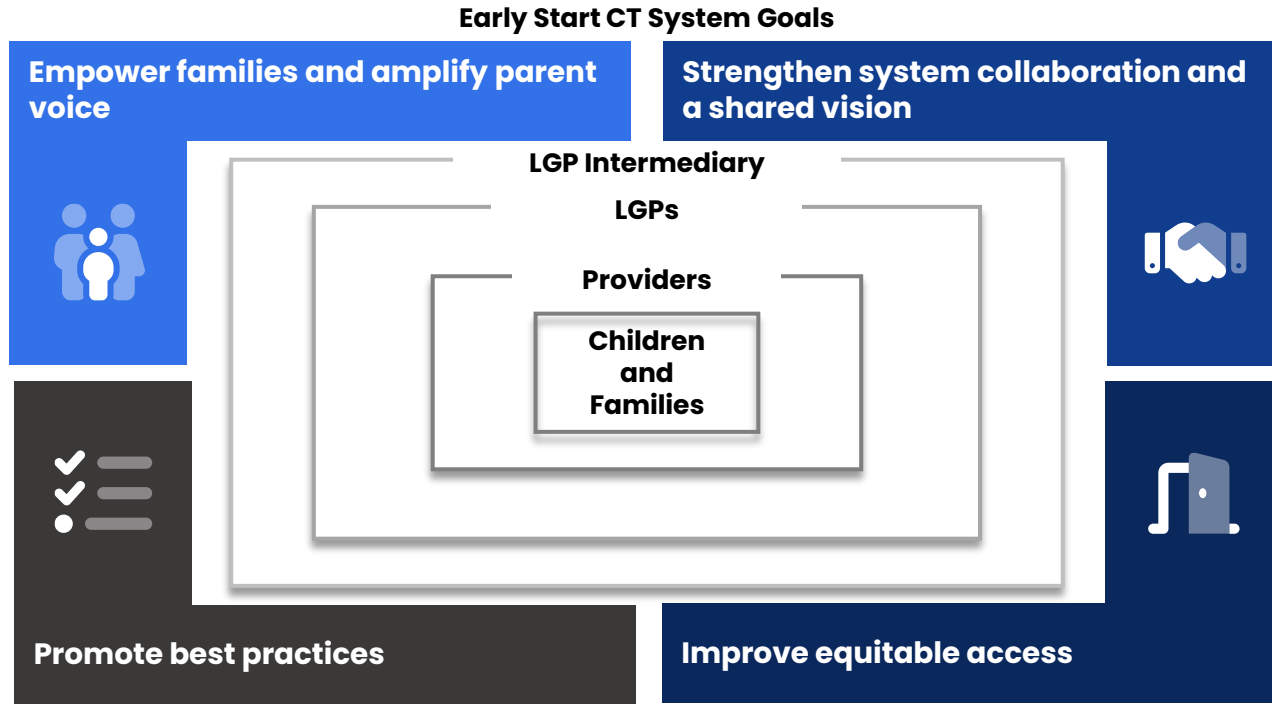
Creates 20,000 new or extended day child care spaces by 2032

Strengthens the whole birth through 5 early childhood system with funding to assure parity and stability for infant and toddler care

Supports Connecticut's economy and the early childhood workforce



Early Start CT's Goals and System





Available for all CT providers and families
- HB 5003

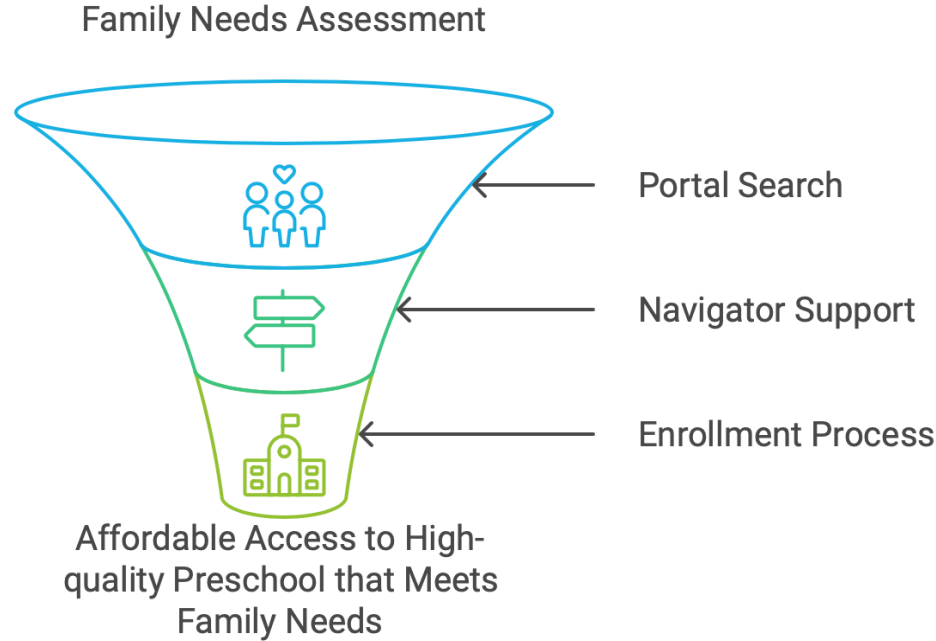
One Point of Entry Portal

To create the Early Care and Education Program Portal to provide families with a means of accessing real-time information about slot availability in early care and education programs in the state. The portal shall:

- Allow families to submit information for resource and referral and enrollment purposes in early childhood programs;
- Provide the ability for the OEC to manage payments to early childhood programs;
- House information on the availability of free or subsidized slots, in each town, and on a regional and statewide basis;
- Allow early childhood providers to enter slot availability and enrollment information into the portal;
- Be accessed through a mobile app or Internet website;
- Allow families to apply for child care subsidies or other assistance.



Will help families with a state-of-the-art enrollment system



Health Insurance Subsidy

A **health insurance subsidy pilot program** for early childhood educators will be launched in FY27, in partnership with Access Health CT. There will be \$10 million available for the subsidy.



Available for the field

- SB1



Child Care Facilities Grant Program for Construction and Renovation (HB 7288)



HB7288

OEC will establish an application process and eligibility criteria for prioritizing grant applications and awarding grants that considers the scope of each design, construction or renovation project and the type of child care facility to be constructed or renovated.

- **Grant Program:** Offers financial assistance for facility improvements for licensed centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes. The Office may contract third-party administration and use funds from the Early Childhood Education Endowment for technical assistance.
- **Repayment Clause:** Non-governmental recipients must repay grants if premises cease child care operations within ten years, decreasing by 10% annually.
- **Bond Issuance:** The State Bond Commission may authorize up to \$80 million in bonds, with proceeds funding the grant program.
- **Lien Exemption:** Grants under \$50,000 need not have liens placed on the property.



Early Start CT Anticipated RFA Fall 2025

This fall, OEC will be issuing a Request for Application for new and existing programs for Early Start CT.

- The application will be open to all provider types.
- Per legislation:
 - 35% of the approved spaces shall be used for infant and toddler spaces.
 - Programs interested in applying will be required to participate in Connecticut's quality improvement system, ELEVATE; and
 - Interested programs shall be participating in or request a waiver for participation from the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).



Thank you!



Office of Early Childhood

Senate Bill 1

Overview



Early Childhood Education Endowment (SB 1)

- Establishes a **state-managed Early Childhood Education Endowment fund** starting July 1, 2025.
- Capitalized by up to \$300M in unappropriated budget surplus from FY25 – for FY26.
- Future contributions depend on budget surpluses and reserves.
- Annual expenditures from endowment: Up to 12% in FY26–FY27, and 10% thereafter.
- Funds from the endowment must supplement and not supplant any other local, state, or federal funds available for ECE, cannot be comingled with CCDF/Care 4 Kids funds, and will not lapse if not expended at the end of the fiscal year.



Uses of the Fund

The funds in the endowment are to support:

- **Expansion costs** (e.g., higher provider rates, increased slots and access through Early Start CT, at least 35% of new slots must be for infant and toddler care)
- **Programmatic costs** (e.g., enrollment campaigns, workforce scholarships, Local Governance Partners (LGPs), technical assistance)
- **Administrative costs** (e.g., staffing, data & technology systems)



Reduced Cost for Families

Beginning July 1, 2027:

- **Free child care options** for families enrolled in Early Start CT earning under \$100,000/year.
- **Sliding scale contributions** (up to 7%) for families enrolled in Early Start CT earning more than \$100,000/year.
- Average parent now pays 16–27% of their income for child care



Advisory Board

A new **Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board** will advise on the fund's use and submit annual reports:

- Administered by the Office of the Treasurer
- Tri-chaired by a member of the Senate, House, and the Commissioner of OEC.

In FY32, OEC will be required to submit an impact analysis to the Advisory Board for the entire early childhood field in Connecticut and submit recommendations for expansion at that time.



House Bill 5003

Overview



House Bill 7288 (Bond Bill)

Overview



Early Start CT Anticipated Request for Application (RFA)

Fall 2025



Office of Early Childhood

Discussion Questions

- How do you see this endowment helping to strengthen early childhood education in your own community or setting?
- How can we make sure the funding is used in ways that are sustainable and responsive to real needs over time?
- What's the best way to keep families, providers, and advocates informed and engaged in this process?
- How can we show the impact of this fund in ways that matter to families and providers?



Questions & Thank You 😊

If you would like to provide feedback virtually, we have an option for that! Please scan the QR code



Provide Additional Feedback!

