



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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February 7, 2024

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara
Chairman, House Committee on Education
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7291-- An Act Relating to Education – Rhode Island Early Care and Education Workforce Data Act

Dear Chair McNamara:

I am writing in support of H 7291, with a proposed amendment, which seeks to codify the Rhode Island early care and education workforce registry. The bill would require the Rhode Island Department of Human Services to launch the registry by December 1, 2024, using standards set by the National Workforce Registry Alliance, and provide an annual report on the data gathered – all intended to support and increase transparency in the early childhood field.

Importantly, DHS has launched the first phase of the Rhode Island Start Early System (RISES) Workforce Registry, federally required and funded in part through the budgetary process with American Rescue Plan Act funds. The Workforce Registry DHS recently launched meets the nationally recommended guidelines. As part of the release, the registry will:

- Provide real-time data about the early childhood workforce in Rhode Island;
- Deploy a comprehensive system for providers to share employment and educational information, including available open positions through a job board;
- Connect professionals to the Center for Early Learning Professionals (CELP), which is our professional development and technical assistance hub to register for professional development opportunities as well as tracking of courses completed;
- Include information about staff who work directly with children at all licensed child care providers, early learning centers, and family child care homes in the state;
- Offer direct communication of important information and professional development opportunities for front-line child care and early educator staff;
- Gather and maintain information about demographics, by age and qualifications, and annual turnover data to inform the state on future decisions

With this release, Rhode Island has officially joined the National Workforce Registry Alliance. Since the new system will have real-time workforce data, DHS proposes the following amendment in green be made to H7291 for the committee's recommendation.

(c) Annually, beginning on or before March 31, 2025, the department of human services shall produce an annual report on the status of the early care and education registry and the characteristics of the early care and education workforce, including demographic information, qualifications, and turnover data in alignment with federal requirements. The report shall be publicly posted to the department's website. ~~shared with the general assembly, the children's cabinet, all licensed child care centers and family child care homes, and individuals participating in the registry. The report shall also be posted on the department's website for the general public.~~

I appreciate the committee's consideration of the proposed amendment. I would also like to thank Representative Shallcross Smith and the bill sponsors for introducing and championing this legislation.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Director

RI Department of Human Services

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education
The Honorable Mary Ann Shallcross Smith
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy