

1 Introduced by Committee on Human Services

2 Date:

3 Subject: Human services; child care; child care financial assistance program;
4 student loan repayment assistance; scholarships

5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to adjust the
6 market rates and benefits within the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.
7 It proposes to enable expenditures for the modernization of the Bright Futures
8 Information System. This bill also proposes to enable expenditures for
9 scholarships and student loan repayment assistance for individuals employed
10 by a regulated, privately operated center-based child care program or family
11 child care home. This bill proposes to allow certain providers to use their
12 experience to obtain an exemption from the Department for Children and
13 Families' educational requirements.

14 An act relating to Vermont's child care and early learning system

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 * * * Legislative Intent * * *

3 **Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT**

4 It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

5 (1) Vermont strive to enhance the capacity and affordability of the child

6 care and early learning system and support the growth and professional

7 development of its workforce; and

8 (2) investments and initiatives set forth in this act are meant to

9 compliment the anticipated redesign of the Child Care Financial Assistance

10 Program, which shall be monitored by the General Assembly.

11 * * * Child Care Financial Assistance Program * * *

12 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 3512 is amended to read:

13 § 3512. CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM;

14 ELIGIBILITY

15 (a)(1) The Child Care Financial Assistance Program is established to

16 subsidize, to the extent that funds permit, the costs of child care for families

17 that need child care services in order to obtain employment, to retain

18 employment, or to obtain training leading to employment. Families seeking

19 employment shall ~~not~~ be entitled to participate in the Program for a period in

20 ~~excess of one month~~ up to three months, unless that period is extended by and

21 the Commissioner may further extend that period.

1 restore the base for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) and
2 \$6,900,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Division for the
3 purpose of adjusting the sliding fee scale and reimbursement rates in CCFAP
4 as follows:

5 (1) adjust the sliding fee scale of CCFAP to ensure that families whose
6 gross income is between 100 and 300 percent of the current federal poverty
7 guidelines receive between 100 and 10 percent of the available financial
8 assistance benefit, scaling appropriately between set eligibility levels as
9 follows:

10 (A) 95 percent of the available financial assistance benefit for
11 families at 125 percent of the current federal poverty guidelines;

12 (B) 75 percent of the available financial assistance benefit for
13 families at 150 percent of the current federal poverty guidelines; and

14 (C) 50 percent of the available financial assistance benefit for
15 families at 200 percent of the current federal poverty guidelines; and

16 (2) align rates of reimbursement for preschool and school age children
17 participating in CCFAP in fiscal year 2020 with the market rates reported on
18 the 2015 Vermont Market Rate Survey.

1 * * * Early Child Care and Development Program Grant Funds * * *

2 **Sec. 4. REALLOCATION OF EARLY CHILD CARE AND**

3 **DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FUNDS AND PROGRAM**

4 **CESSATION**

5 In fiscal year 2020, any funds previously appropriated to the Department for
6 Children and Families' Child Development Division for the Early Care and
7 Child Development Grant Program established pursuant to 2017 Acts and
8 Resolves No. 85, §§ E.318 and E.318.1 and 2018 (Sp. Sess.) Acts and
9 Resolves No. 11, § E.318 shall be available to fund the Child Care Financial
10 Assistance Program in fiscal year 2020 and thereafter. The Early Care and
11 Child Development Grant Program shall cease operation on June 30, 2019.

12 * * * Bright Futures Information System * * *

13 **Sec. 5. BRIGHT FUTURES INFORMATION SYSTEM;**

14 **MODERNIZATION PLAN**

15 Up to \$100,000.00 appropriated for the Child Care Financial Assistance
16 Program pursuant to Sec. 3 of this act may be used by the Department for
17 Children and Families' Child Development Division for the purpose of
18 developing a modernization plan for the Bright Futures Information System.
19 On or before Dec. 1, 2019, the Commissioner shall submit a report to the
20 House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and to the
21 Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare providing:

- 1 (1) a project plan and timeline;
- 2 (2) a fiscal analysis of the plan; and
- 3 (3) the project team tasked with overseeing the project’s
4 implementation.

5 ** * Student Loan Repayment Assistance and T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships * * *

6 Sec. **6.** STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE

7 (a)(1) Up to \$500,000.00 appropriated for the Child Care Financial
8 Assistance Program pursuant to Sec. 3 of this act may be used by the
9 Department for Children and Families’ Child Development Division for the
10 purpose of providing student loan repayment assistance to any individual
11 employed by a privately operated center-based child care program or family
12 child care home that is regulated by the Division.

13 (2) An eligible individual shall:

14 (A) work in a privately operated center-based child care program or
15 family child care home that is regulated by the Division for at least an average
16 of 30 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year;

17 (B) receive an annual salary of not more than \$40,000.00; and

18 (C) have acquired credits in early childhood, child or human
19 development, elementary education, special education with a birth to eight
20 focus, and child and family services.

1 (3) To participate in the program set forth in this section, an eligible
2 individual shall submit to the Division documentation expressing his or her
3 intent to work in a regulated, privately operated center-based child care
4 program or family child care home for at least the following 12 months. A
5 participant may receive up to \$2,000.00 annually in student loan repayment
6 assistance, which shall be distributed by the Division in two allotments. The
7 Division shall distribute at least half of the individual’s total annual benefit
8 after the individual has completed six months of employment in accordance
9 with the program. The remainder of an individual’s total annual benefit shall
10 be distributed by the Division after the individual has completed the 12th
11 month of employment in accordance with the program.

12 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that an appropriation that meets
13 or exceeds the amount appropriated in fiscal year 2020 be made in fiscal years
14 2021 through 2024 to accomplish the purpose set forth in subsection (a) of this
15 section.

16 (c)(1) The Division shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
17 necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

18 (2) Funds used from this appropriation shall be expended for repayment
19 of student loans. Student loan repayments shall be available pursuant to this
20 section on a first-come, first-served basis until the appropriation is depleted.

1 (d) Otherwise eligible individuals with access to alternative loan
2 forgiveness or loan repayment programs shall not be considered eligible for
3 repayment assistance under this section.

4 (e) An individual shall not simultaneously participate in the student loan
5 repayment assistance program set forth in this section and the T.E.A.C.H.
6 Early Childhood Vermont Scholarship Project set forth in Sec. 7 of this act.

7 Sec. 7. T.E.A.C.H. EARLY CHILDHOOD VERMONT SCHOLARSHIP
8 PROJECT

9 (a) Up to \$500,000.00 appropriated for the Child Care Financial Assistance
10 Program pursuant to Sec. 3 of this act may be used by the Vermont Association
11 for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC) for the purpose of expanding
12 eligible recipients to include individuals employed by a privately operated
13 center-based child care program or family child care home that is regulated by
14 the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division.

15 (b) VTAEYC shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to
16 implement the provisions of this section. Scholarships distributed pursuant to
17 this section shall be available on a first-come, first-served basis until any
18 designated funds are depleted.

19 (c) It is the intent of the General Assembly that an appropriation that meets
20 or exceeds the amount appropriated in fiscal year 2020 be made in fiscal years

1 2021 through 2024 to accomplish the purpose set forth in subsection (a) of this
2 section.

3 (d) An individual shall not simultaneously participate in the T.E.A.C.H.
4 Early Childhood Vermont Scholarship Project set forth in this section and the
5 student loan repayment assistance program set forth in Sec. 6 of this act.

6 **Sec. 8. REPORT; EVALUATION OF EXPENDITURES AND PROGRAMS**

7 On or before January 1, 2024, Commissioner for Children and Families, in
8 consultation with stakeholders, shall submit a report to the House Committee
9 on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare:

10 (1) evaluating the effectiveness of the expenditure in the Child Care
11 Financial Assistance Program set forth in Sec. 3 of this act, the student loan
12 repayment program set forth in Sec. 6 of this act, and the T.E.A.C.H. Early
13 Childhood Vermont Scholarship Project set forth in Sec. 7 of this act;

14 (2) making recommendations as to whether the expenditures and
15 programs in Secs. 3, 6, and 7 of this act should be continued and if so, the
16 appropriate funding amount and source; and

17 (3) evaluating how the expenditures and programs in Secs. 3, 6, and 7 of
18 this act contribute to Vermont's children and young people reaching their
19 potential pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2311.

1 * * * Variance for Educational and Experiential Requirements* * *

2 Sec. 9. EDUCATIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL VARIANCE

3 (a) For individuals operating or employed in a registered family child care
4 home or as a director or teacher associate in a center-based program for 10 or
5 more years prior to September 1, 2016, the Commissioner for Children and
6 Families or designee may issue a variance to the Child Development
7 Division’s rule regarding educational and experiential requirements to allow an
8 individual to maintain employment in that same role regardless of whether the
9 family child care provider, family child care assistant, director, or teacher
10 associate intends to attain the otherwise necessary educational requirements.
11 To be eligible for a variance, the family child care provider, family child care
12 assistant, director, or teacher associate shall:

13 (1) work continuously in a regulated program with a full license in good
14 standing; and

15 (2) meet the Divisions’ educational and experiential requirements in
16 place prior to the adoption of the new rule, which were effective beginning
17 September 1, 2016.

18 (b) The Commissioner or designee shall review any violation occurring in a
19 regulated program where a family child care provider, family child care
20 assistant, director, or teacher associate is under variance and may revoke the

1 variance **granted by this section** depending upon the seriousness and
2 circumstances of the violation.

3 **(c) Any variance granted under this section shall be terminated on July 1,**
4 **2024, and extensions shall not be granted beyond that date.**

5 * * * Effective Date * * *

6 Sec. **10**. EFFECTIVE DATE

7 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.