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# Forward Momentum: Vermont's journey to ECE professional licensure

An Affiliate of naeyc

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# Vermont's Child Care Campaign: Overview

Over 40,000 Vermonters working to create affordable access to quality child care for all Vermont families by 2025:

- **Affordability:** No family spends more than 10% of their household income on child care
- **Access:** 100% of families have child care that meets their needs
- **Quality:** 100% of children birth-to-five are taught by prepared early childhood educators who are professionally compensated




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# Elevate the voices of early childhood educators

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# The 2023 Child Care Bill (Act 76):

- Stabilized the early childhood education sector and increased access to affordable, quality child care
- Includes long-term, sustainable, public investment in Vermont's child care system (through payroll tax)
- Invests $125 million into the system annually

**Act 76 makes Vermont's child care system one of the most expansive in the nation.**






# Project Timeline

**Workforce-Led Steps toward a State-Recognized, Nationally Aligned Early Childhood Education Profession**

**Phase 1 | 2018-2019**

**Gauging the will of the workforce**

- Do nothing. Wait and see. (4%)
- Make a partial change. (24%)
- Do the work to advance as a profession. (72%)

**Phase 2 | 2019-2022**

**Aligning with the Unifying Framework**

Workforce consensus to align design recommendations in these areas, with key questions and concerns to be addressed:

- Professional identity
- Three designations
- Aligned professional preparation pathways
- Professional compensation
- Individual professional licensure

**Phase 3 | 2022-2025**

**Working with the early childhood education ecosystem**

Design system recommendations; identify supports, resources, and infrastructure; and develop policy with ecosystem partners, including:

- Early childhood educators
- Professional preparation programs
- Employers and owners
- State government and agencies
- Federal government and agencies
- State and national professional governance bodies

**Goal**

**Our Audacious Vision becomes reality in Vermont and the nation**

Each and every child, beginning at birth, has the opportunity to benefit from high-quality, affordable early childhood education, delivered by an effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated workforce.

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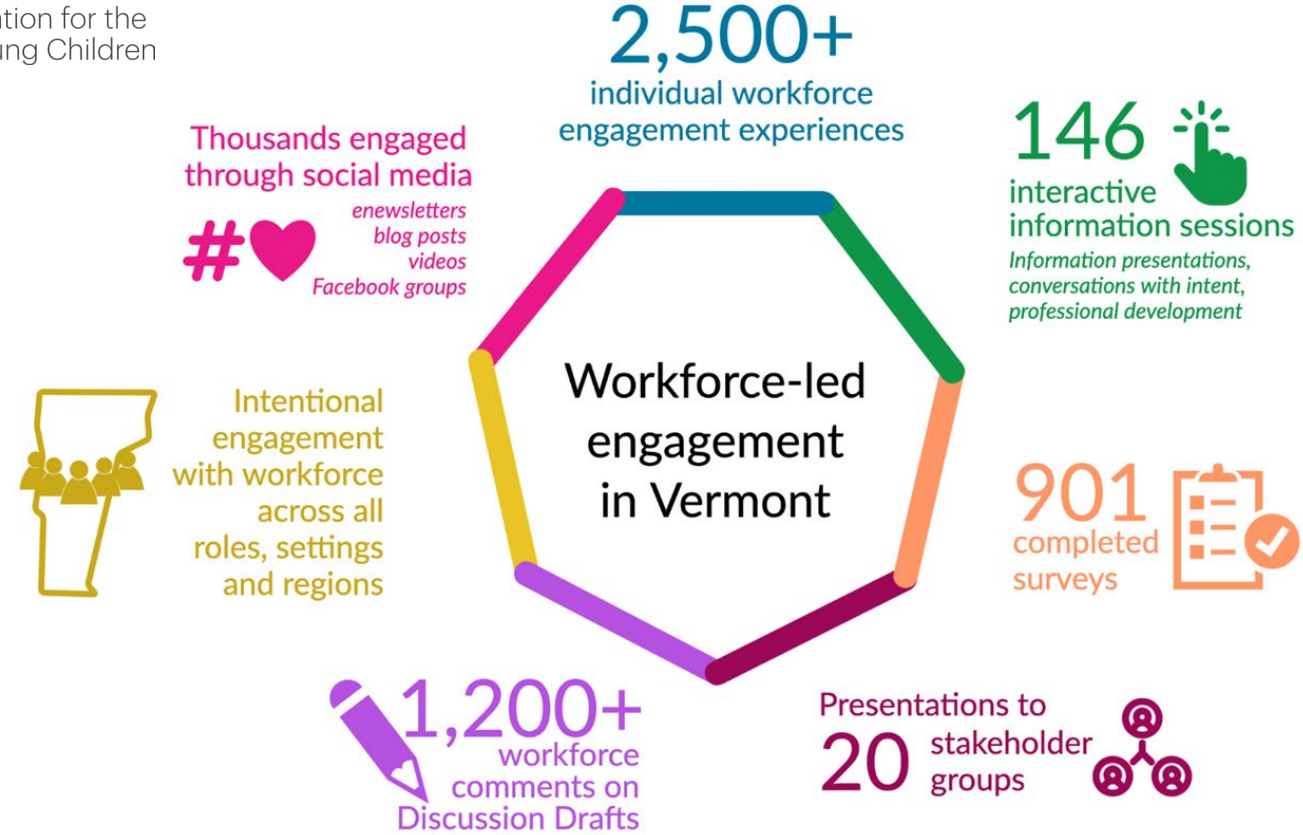

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# Benefits of a Regulated Profession

Children and Families

- Improved outcomes for children - continuity, quality
- Increased equity - accessible, quality
- Individual accountability - diverse, well-prepared

General Public

- Businesses - now, future workforce
- Attracting young families to Vermont

ECE Workforce

- Increased wages with benefits
- Standardized, transferable, stackable credits-Clear Career Pathways

Administrators of ECE system - accessible, transferable, individual data

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# Recognition for the ECE Profession

- Professional identity
- Consistent qualifications across settings
- Compensation to increase with qualifications

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# Vermont's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR)

- Division of the Vermont Secretary of State's Office
- Mission is to **protect the public from incompetent or unethical practitioners** through a system of licensure. They support boards and advisor groups that oversee licensure of many professions.
- Becoming a regulated profession requires submitting an application to OPR, who then performs a regulatory review to assess and determine whether Vermont should regulate the profession. OPR submits a report of their findings to the Legislature.

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# Essential Components of

## Sunrise Review Assessment

- 3 Designations
- Transitional licenses
- Accountability
- Recruitment & Retention
- Workforce Data



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# OPR Report to Vermont Legislature (January 2025)

- OPR found that early childhood educators in non-public settings **should be a regulated profession in Vermont.** They determined that a **uniform regulatory system** of early childhood educators in non-public settings **will protect the public from multiple harms.**
- They found that a **system of licensure** is the appropriate form of governmental regulation, as registration (which requires no qualifications) and certification (which is a voluntary credential) would not adequately protect the public.

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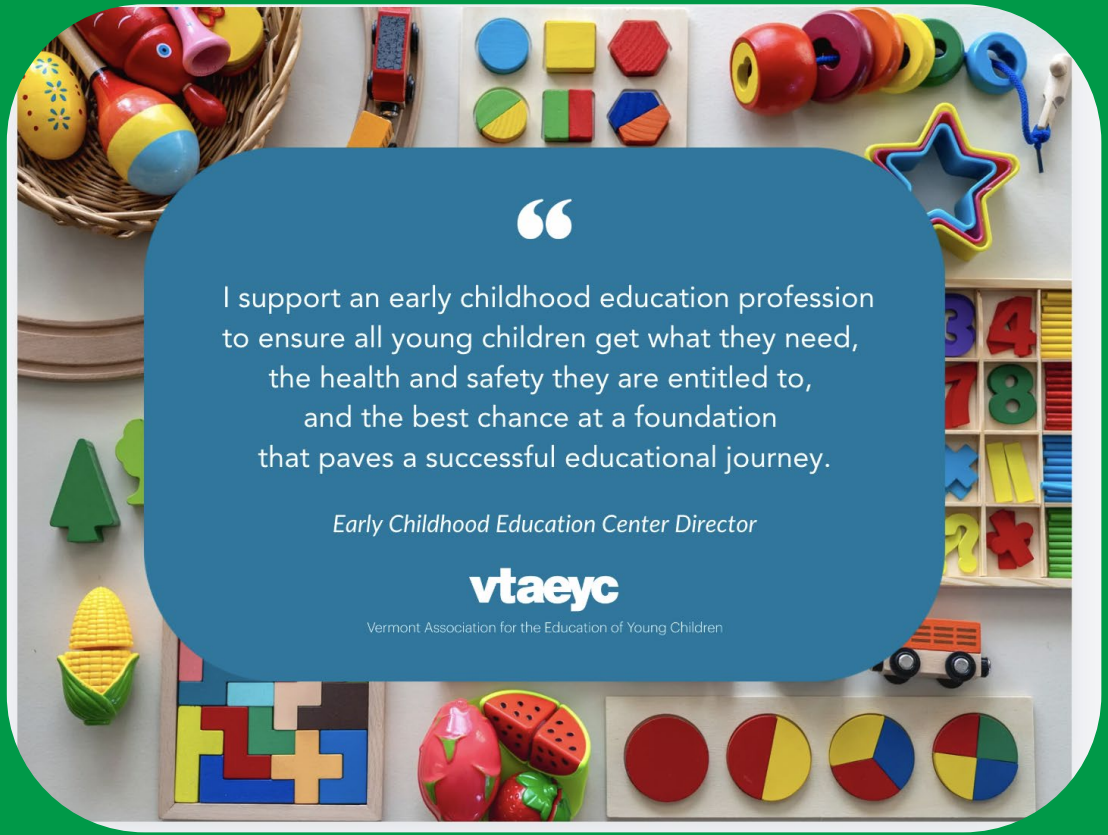
# Always include a way in



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## Strong Foundation

## 2014-2017

*VTAEYC built our brand on these core programs*

TEACH Early Childhood® Vermont Scholarships

-

Apprenticeship

-

Early Childhood Educator Conference

## Leveling Up

## 2018-2024

*VTAEYC rapidly expanded staff, partnerships and programs*

SPARQS

-

Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program

-

TEACH Early Childhood® Vermont Scholarship Expansion

-

Youth Apprenticeship

-

Gap Grant

-

VTAEYC Exchange

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Advancing Early Childhood Education as a Profession

## Building the Future

## 2025-Onward

*What we will do, and what we will need*

Strenghten workforce recruitment and retention

-

Source flexible funding

-

Strenghten partnerships

-

Strenghten advocacy

-

Strenghten a culture of quality throughout our early childhood education system

# The ECE Profession Bill

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- Establishes Early Childhood Education as a regulated profession in Vermont
- Based on recommendations from **Office of Professional Regulation (OPR)**
- At the workforce, state, and national levels, the recommendations for an early childhood education profession are aligned and consistent



# Proposed ECE License Designations

as recommended by national Commission on Professional Excellence in ECE / Vermont Workforce / Vermont Office of Professional Regulation

| | |
|---|---|
| **ECE III License**<br>**$$$** | **Education Requirement:**<br>Bachelor's degree in ECE *or* initial master's degree in ECE<br>**Scope of Practice:**<br>Lead educator in *birth-age 8* settings |
| **ECE II License**<br>**$$** | **Education Requirement:**<br>Associate degree in ECE<br>**Scope of Practice:**<br>Lead educator in *birth–age 5* settings |
| **ECE I License**<br>**$** | **Education Requirement:**<br>At least 120 hours of an ECE preparation program<br>**Scope of Practice:**<br>Support role in birth–age 8 settings |

Adapted from the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*

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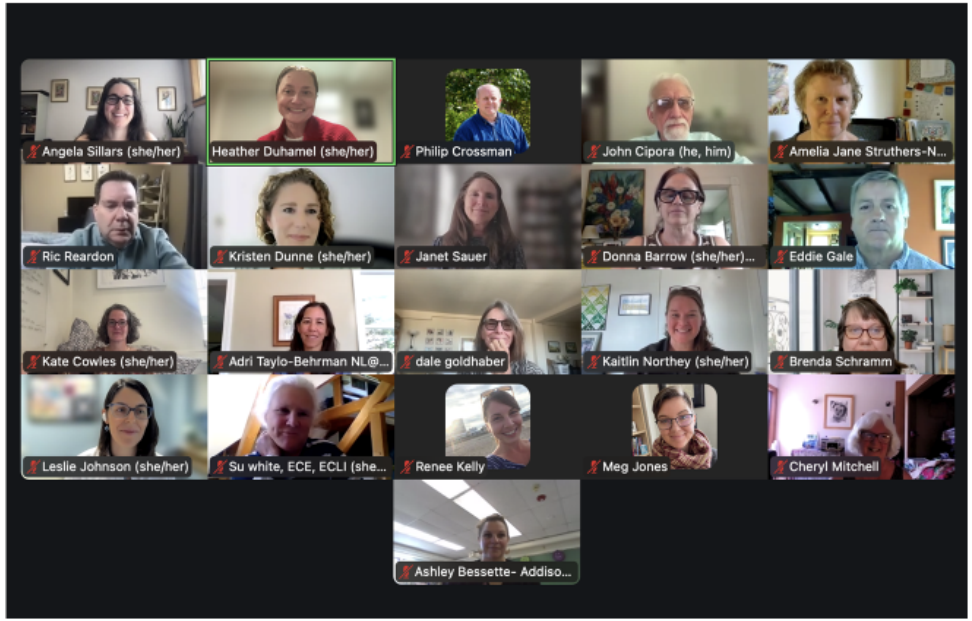
# Implementation Design Teams

- ECE Preparation Pathways Study Group [Subcommittee of Vermont Early Childhood Higher Ed. Consortium]
- ECE I Preparation Pathways Design Team
- Crosswalk of State Licensure Standards and NAEYC EC Professional Standards and Competencies [Subcommittee of Professional Preparation and Development Committee]
- Career Ladder Transformation Team
- Bridge/Transition Design Team
- Compensation Scale Team
- Ongoing partnership with NAEYC and Commission on Professional Excellence in Early Childhood Education

# Vermont Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium

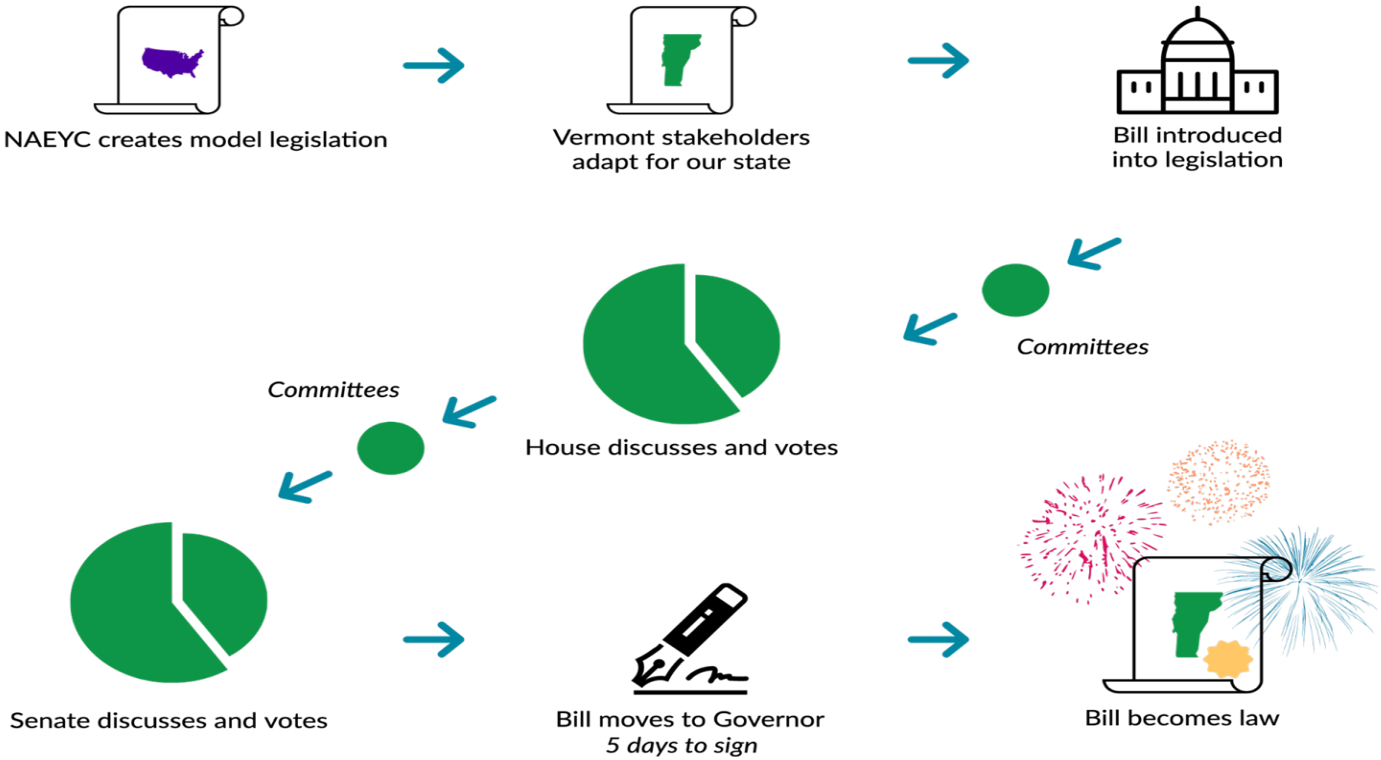



38 Community Stakeholders

Faculty from all Vermont Higher Education Institutions Represented

Quarterly Meetings & Subgroups

# Vermont's Legislative Process



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# 2025 - ECE Profession Bill

- Senate passed the ECE Profession language as part the big OPR Bill. (OPR has a bill every year.)
- Senate bill had amendments added by the Senate Committee on Government Operations.
- New professions are rarely established in one session.
- This is cause for celebration!



# How Does The ECE Profession Bill Align With Our Recommendations?

| Vermont Workforce Recommendations | Bill Language |
| --- | --- |
| **Professional Identity:**<br>Early Childhood Educator<br>Early Childhood Education | Bill defines "Early childhood educator" as an individual licensed to provide early childhood education. |
| **Three Designations with Aligned Preparation Pathways:**<br>ECE I: Preparation program of minimum 120 clock hours<br>ECE II: Associate degree in early childhood education<br>ECE III: Bachelor's degree in early childhood education | Bill creates three license types:<br>ECE I: Preparation program of minimum 120 clock hours<br>ECE II: Associate degree in early childhood education<br>ECE III: Bachelor's degree in early childhood education<br>**Senate revision adds a fourth limited Family Child Care Provider license* |
| **Phased-in Implementation:**<br>The current workforce must be supported. We advocate for flexible and supportive policies that give credit for expertise, phase in the new profession over time, and provide access to the supports and resources educators say they need to be successful. | Bill includes a transitional license for teachers and directors who do not meet the ECE II and III educational and experiential licensure requirements.<br>These transitional licenses are valid for 2 years and may be renewed up to twice.<br>**Senate revision adds an extra 2-year renewal option, for a total of 8 years* |
| **Individual License to Practice:**<br>Individual regulation through licensure allows for reciprocity across states and creates a system of accountability. | Bill establishes that a licensed early childhood educator shall provide care and educational instruction to children from birth through 8 years of age in a variety of settings.<br>**Senate revision clarifies regulation applies to educators working in non-public settings* |
| **Professional Compensation:**<br>Compensation will be funded through a supportive system that recognizes early childhood education as a public good. | Bill does not address this directly.<br>Act 76 mandates that a report is due on professional compensation in 2026. This is in line with the timeline outlines in the bill. |

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*Updated 8/2025*

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# Empowering Early Childhood Educators

- Creation of ECE Licensing Board (composition, terms, organization, executive director, powers & duties)
- Licensure Process
- Waiver of Requirements, Transition License, Reciprocal Licensure, Provisional Licensure
- Professional Standards & Competencies
- Continuing Education

# Caregivers For Young Children 0 – 5

## Trusted Caregiver

Family member, neighbor, friend, nanny



**Individual Regulation:**
None
**Program Regulation:**
None. May serve a maximum of 3 families, including caregiver's own
**Child Ages:**
0+
**Hours Served:**
Varies
**Public Funding Source:**
In certain cases, eligible for child care tuition assistance payments

## Early Childhood Educator

Home-Based



**Individual Regulation:**
**None.** Proposed through ECE Profession Bill
**Program Regulation:**
CDD
**Child Ages:**
6 Weeks – 5 Years
**Hours Served:**
Full time +
**Public Funding Source:**
Eligible for child care tuition assistance payments

## Early Childhood Educator

Center-Based



**Individual Regulation:**
**None.** Proposed through ECE Profession Bill
**Program Regulation:**
CDD
**Child Ages:**
6 Weeks – 5 Years
**Hours Served:**
Full time +
**Public Funding Source:**
Eligible for child care tuition assistance payments

## Early Childhood Educator

Public School-Based



**Individual Regulation:**
AOE Educator License
**Program Regulation:**
AOE and CDD
**Child Ages:**
3 – 5 Years
**Hours Served:**
10+ hours/week
**Public Funding Source:**
Public education funding

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The ECE Profession Bill would create licensure through Vermont's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) for early childhood educators in home- and center-based programs. Approximately 6,500 Vermont early childhood educators work in these settings.

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# Where We Are Now

