

S.56 Update: How the bill connects to Advancing as a Profession

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Since S.56 was introduced early this month, we've been working to understand all the parts of the bill and to determine what we want to communicate to legislators. This bill is currently being considered by two committees – the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, which is focused on the parts of the bill not related to Universal Pre-K (UPK), and the Senate Education Committee, which is working on language for a pre-K study that is intended to replace the original pre-K proposal in the bill.

Health and Welfare is now working on [S.56 Draft 1.1](#). By the time you read this, they will have marked up their portion of the bill, so it will have changed again. Here's a recap of how we've been involved to date:

1. VTAEYC's partner Let's Grow Kids held a number of overview sessions to inform everyone about the bill as introduced and answer questions: [S.56 FAQs and video](#)
2. For the Senate Education Committee, Advancing as a Profession Task Force members [Alyson Grzyb](#) and Staci Otis provided testimony about changes proposed to UPK and potential unintended negative consequences for center-based and family child care home programs. (See all [written](#) and [recorded](#) testimony to this committee.)
3. For the Health and Welfare Committee, Task Force member [Christina Goodwin](#) made connections to advancing the profession, as well as sharing her concerns about proposed changes to UPK. (See all [written](#) and [recorded](#) testimony to this committee.)
4. On February 22, before the Health and Welfare Committee, NAEYC's Lauren Hogan and I testified specifically about the Unifying Framework, the national picture, work in Vermont to advance ECE as a profession, and the parts of S.56 that support those efforts. [Watch our testimony here.](#)

We know folks are concerned about UPK, and the committees are hearing that. At the same time, there is a lot of good in S.56 and we are uniquely positioned to highlight these parts of the bill that that are aligned with advancing ECE as a profession:

- Increased funding for CCFAP is a good step toward greater public investment in ECE and will benefit eligible families. We need to continue to expand public investment toward becoming near-universal to also create a reliable funding stream for stable professional compensation for ECEs system-wide.
- A tiered professional compensation standard is a good idea. We advocate for the three designations ECE I, II, and III and that the compensation scale we have already developed be brought to that design work by adding VTAEYC as a partner with CDD and BBF in the charge to create this framework.
- Compensation comparable to public school PreK-grade 3 educators is compatible with recommendations in the Unifying Framework. We advocate for “true wage parity” and including benefits, both of which are in the scale we have already developed.
- A requirement that programs receiving CCFAP (public funds) pay staff according to these minimum compensation standards is also compatible with the Unifying Framework.

S.56 shines a light on the early care and education system. It may well put mechanisms in place for the next legislation that will establish the profession. S.56 would make huge strides for family affordability and program sustainability. It would dig and pour the foundation for ECE professional recognition: the next bill will build the house for the profession.