

1 S.29

2 Introduced by Senators Snelling, Ashe, Cummings, Fox, Lyons, MacDonald,

3 McCormack, Miller, Pollina, Sears and White

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Human services; early childhood educators

7 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to improve the quality of child care
8 and early learning programs for Vermont's children and families by
9 establishing a new model of collaboration between the state and child care
10 providers that recognizes the critical importance of early childhood educators
11 in the delivery of high-quality early childhood education.

12 An act relating to early childhood educators

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

14 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

15 The general assembly finds:

16 (1) The instruction that young children receive is one of the most critical
17 aspects of child care.

18 (2) Vermont families currently need affordable high-quality child care.

19 (3) The early education a child receives before school age, particularly
20 before the age of three, has a profound effect on future mental, psychological,

1 and academic success. High-quality early education lays the vital groundwork
2 for the success of Vermont children.

3 (4) The early education workforce faces an assortment of challenges,
4 such as low wages, lack of benefits, and insufficient continuing education
5 opportunities. These obstacles prevent the development of a stable early
6 education workforce, and as a result the availability of high-quality early child
7 care in Vermont continues to suffer.

8 (5) Whether center-based or family-based, all early childhood educators
9 should have the opportunity to work collectively with the state to improve the
10 standards in their profession, enhance educational training courses, increase
11 child-care subsidy assistance, and ensure the constant improvement of early
12 learning in Vermont.

13 (6) The matters subject to chapter 36 of Title 33 are within the purview
14 of the state and within the community of interest of all child-care providers
15 participating in or eligible to participate in the subsidy system.

16 (7) Child-care providers do not forfeit their rights under the National
17 Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. § 151, et seq.) by becoming members of an
18 organization that represents them in their dealings with the state.

1 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. chapter 36 is added to read:

2 CHAPTER 36. THE EXTENSION OF LIMITED COLLECTIVE
3 BARGAINING RIGHTS TO CHILD-CARE PROVIDERS PARTICIPATING
4 IN OR ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VERMONT CHILD-CARE
5 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

6 § 3601. PURPOSE

7 (a) The general assembly recognizes the right of all child-care providers
8 participating in or eligible to participate in the subsidy system to collectively
9 bargain with the state over matters within the state's purview in order to
10 improve the quality of child care for Vermont families.

11 (b) The general assembly intends to create a new type of collective
12 bargaining for child-care providers whereby they can join together to bargain
13 with the state to improve the quality of child care for Vermont families.
14 Unlike traditional collective bargaining, this new approach will give child-care
15 workers the opportunity to bargain with the state over the state's support for
16 and regulation of child-care services, a matter of common concern to both
17 child-care center directors and workers.

18 (c) Specific terms and conditions of employment at individual child-care
19 centers which are the subject of traditional collective bargaining between
20 employers and employees are outside the limited scope of this act.
21 Accordingly, traditional policy concerns over supervisors and employees being

1 organized into a common bargaining unit are inapplicable. All child-care
2 providers will be equally able to maintain full membership in the organization
3 that represents them in their efforts to improve the quality of child care in
4 Vermont.

5 § 3602. DEFINITIONS

6 For purposes of this chapter:

7 (1) “Board” means the state labor relations board established in 3 V.S.A.
8 § 921.

9 (2)(A) “Child-care provider” means a person who provides child-care
10 services as defined by subdivision 3511(3) of this title and who receives or is
11 eligible to receive any subsidy payments through a Vermont child-care
12 financial assistance program, including individuals in supervisory and
13 nonsupervisory roles providing care in or employed by:

14 (i) a licensed child-care center;

15 (ii) a licensed child-care home;

16 (iii) a registered child-care home;

17 (iv) a licensed after-school program;

18 (v) a license-exempt child-care provider home; and

19 (vi) any other category of provider eligible to participate in a

20 Vermont child-care financial program.

1 (B) “Child-care provider” does not include any person directly
2 employed by a public school district.

3 (3) “Collective bargaining” or “bargaining collectively” means the
4 process by which the state and the exclusive representative of child-care
5 providers negotiate terms or conditions with the intent to arrive at an
6 agreement which, when reached, shall be legally binding on all parties.

7 (4) “Exclusive representative” means a labor organization that has been
8 elected or recognized and certified under this chapter and has the right under
9 section 3607 of this title to represent child-care providers in an appropriate
10 bargaining unit for the purpose of collective bargaining.

11 (5) “Subsidy payment” means any payment made by the state to assist in
12 the provision of child care through the state’s child-care financial assistance
13 programs.

14 § 3603. ESTABLISHMENT OF LIMITED COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

15 (a) Child-care providers shall be considered state employees and the state
16 shall be considered the employer solely for the purpose of collective
17 bargaining under this chapter. The state shall not assume vicarious tort
18 liability for any action taken by a child-care provider.

19 (b) The state, through the governor’s designee, shall meet with the
20 exclusive representative for the purposes of entering into a written agreement
21 that shall legally bind the state and the exclusive representative.

1 § 3604. SCOPE OF BARGAINING

2 The scope of collective bargaining under this chapter includes:

3 (1) Child-care subsidy rates and reimbursement practices, including rate
4 variations reflecting different provider classifications and quality incentives.

5 (2) Health care, disability, retirement, and related benefits.

6 (3) Professional development and training, including financial assistance
7 to meet training requirements and enhancement of recruitment and retention of
8 qualified child-care providers.

9 (4) Child-to-staff ratios.

10 (5) Licensing and other fees.

11 (6) Monitoring and evaluation.

12 (7) Grievance procedures.

13 (8) Representation fees and fair share representation fees.

14 (9) Any other matters relating to the role of the state and its contractors
15 in regulating, subsidizing, and enhancing the quality of child care within the
16 state.

17 § 3605. BARGAINING UNIT

18 (a) Any of the following units, either in combination or separately, shall be
19 considered an appropriate bargaining unit for the purposes of collective
20 bargaining under this chapter:

1 (1) A statewide unit encompassing all child-care providers as defined in
2 section 3602 of this chapter.

3 (2) A unit composed of registered home child-care providers.

4 (3) A unit composed of licensed home child-care providers.

5 (4) A unit composed of supervisors and nonsupervisory employees of
6 licensed child-care centers.

7 (5) A unit composed of license-exempt child-care providers.

8 (b) Child-care providers may elect an exclusive representative for the
9 purpose of collective bargaining pursuant to the procedures set forth in section
10 3607 of this chapter.

11 (c) The exclusive representative of the child-care providers shall represent
12 all child-care providers in the bargaining unit without regard to union
13 membership.

14 § 3606. RIGHTS OF CHILD-CARE PROVIDERS

15 Child-care providers shall have the right to:

16 (1) Organize, form, join, or assist a union or labor organization for the
17 purposes of collective bargaining without interference, restraint, or coercion.

18 (2) Bargain collectively through their chosen representatives.

19 (3) Engage in concerted activities for the purpose of supporting or
20 engaging in collective bargaining.

21 (4) Pursue grievances as provided in this chapter.

1 (5) Refrain from any or all activities related to collective bargaining.

2 § 3607. PETITIONS FOR ELECTION; FILING; INVESTIGATIONS;

3 HEARINGS; DETERMINATIONS

4 (a) A petition may be filed with the board in accordance with regulations
5 prescribed by the board:

6 (1) By a child-care provider or a group of child-care providers or by any
7 individual or labor union acting on their behalf alleging that not less than 30
8 percent of the child-care providers:

9 (A) Wish to be represented for collective bargaining and that the state
10 has declined to recognize their exclusive representative; or

11 (B) Believe that the exclusive representative recognized by the state
12 no longer represents a majority of child-care providers.

13 (2) By the state alleging that one or more individuals or organizations
14 has presented the state with a claim for recognition as the exclusive
15 representative.

16 (b) The board shall investigate the petition, and, if it has reasonable cause
17 to believe that a question of representation exists, shall provide for an
18 appropriate hearing before the board itself, a member thereof, or its agents
19 appointed for that purpose upon due notice. Written notice of the hearing shall
20 be mailed by certified mail to the parties named in the petition not less than
21 seven days before the hearing. If the board finds upon the record of the

1 hearing that a question of representation exists, it shall conduct an election by
2 secret ballot and certify to the parties the results thereof.

3 (c) In determining whether a question of representation exists, the board
4 shall apply the same regulations and rules of decision regardless of the identity
5 of the persons filing the petition or the kind of relief sought.

6 (d) Nothing in this chapter prohibits the waiving of hearings by stipulation
7 for a consent election in conformity with the regulations and rules of decision
8 of the board.

9 (e) For the purposes of this chapter, representatives of child-care providers
10 voluntarily recognized by the state through the voluntary negotiation of an
11 agreement with the unit shall be the recognized representative of the child-care
12 providers until such time as any other representative is recognized under the
13 provisions of this section or until the representatives' authority is rescinded
14 under this chapter.

15 § 3608. ELECTION; RUNOFF ELECTIONS

16 (a) If a question of representation exists, the board shall conduct a secret
17 ballot election to determine the exclusive representative of child-care
18 providers. The labor organization receiving a majority of votes cast shall be
19 certified by the state as the exclusive representative of child-care providers. In
20 any election in which none of the choices on the ballot receive a majority, a
21 runoff shall be conducted by the board. The ballot shall provide for a selection

1 between the two choices receiving the largest and second largest number of
2 valid votes cast in the election.

3 (b) An election shall not be directed during the term of a negotiated
4 agreement or if in the preceding 12 months a valid election has been held.

5 § 3609. POWERS OF REPRESENTATIVES

6 The exclusive representative certified by the state shall be the exclusive
7 representative of all the child-care providers in the unit for the purposes of
8 collective bargaining. However, any individual child-care provider or group of
9 providers shall have the right at any time to present grievances to the state and
10 have such grievances adjusted without the intervention of the exclusive
11 representative, as long as the adjustment is not inconsistent with the terms of a
12 collective bargaining agreement then in effect and provided that the exclusive
13 representative has been given an opportunity to be present at such an
14 adjustment.

15 § 3610. REPRESENTATION AND FAIR SHARE REPRESENTATION

16 FEES

17 (a) Upon the certification or recognition of the bargaining unit's
18 representative and ratification of a collective bargaining agreement, the state
19 shall deduct the negotiated representative and fair share representation fees as
20 agreed to in the collective bargaining agreement. These funds shall be
21 transferred to the treasurer of the exclusive representative.

1 (b) Child-care providers, acting through the exclusive representative, shall
2 not charge a fair share representation fee without establishing and maintaining
3 a procedure to provide nonmembers with:

4 (1) an audited financial statement that identifies the major categories of
5 expenses and divides them into chargeable and nonchargeable expenses; and

6 (2) an opportunity to object to the amount of the agency fee sought.
7 Any amount objected to and reasonably in dispute shall be placed in escrow.

8 § 3611. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES; BINDING ARBITRATION;

9 MEDIATION; FACT-FINDING; LAST BEST OFFER

10 The state and the exclusive representative shall negotiate a procedure for
11 resolving complaints and grievances. A collective bargaining agreement may
12 provide for binding arbitration as the final step of a grievance procedure.

13 Mediation, fact-finding, and last best offer procedures shall be conducted
14 according to the procedures of 21 V.S.A. §§ 1731 and 1732.

15 § 3612. DUTIES

16 (a) The state and all child-care providers and their representatives shall
17 make every reasonable effort to make and maintain agreements concerning
18 matters allowed under this chapter and to settle all disputes arising from the
19 agreements. All disputes between the state and child-care providers shall,
20 upon request of either party, be considered within 15 days of the request or at
21 such times as may be mutually agreed to and if possible settled with all

1 expedition in conference between representatives designated and authorized by
2 the state and the interested child-care providers. This obligation does not
3 compel either party to make any agreements or concessions.

4 (b) Every licensed home child-care provider, registered home child-care
5 provider, licensed child-care center, and license-exempt child-care provider
6 that receives or is eligible to receive child-care subsidies shall submit to the
7 state a list of the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, workplace
8 names, and job titles of their current directors and employees within 14 days of
9 the effective date of this act and shall update the information quarterly,
10 tracking the dates of the state fiscal year.

11 (c) The state shall provide within seven days of a request by a labor
12 organization all available information submitted under subsection (b) of this
13 section.

14 § 3613. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

15 (a) The state shall not:

16 (1) Interfere with, restrain, or coerce child-care providers in the exercise
17 of their rights under this chapter or by any law, rule, or regulation.

18 (2) Discriminate against a child-care provider because of the provider's
19 affiliation with a labor organization or because a provider has filed charges or
20 complaint or given testimony under this chapter.

1 (3) Take negative action against a child-care provider because the
2 provider has taken actions demonstrating the provider's support for a labor
3 organization, including signing a petition, grievance, or affidavit.

4 (4) Refuse to bargain collectively in good faith with the exclusive
5 representative or fail to abide by any agreement reached.

6 (5) Discriminate against a child-care provider based on race, color,
7 creed, religion, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or
8 national origin.

9 (6) Request or require a child-care provider to take an HIV-related blood
10 test or discriminate against a child-care provider based on his or her HIV
11 status.

12 (b) A child-care provider or the exclusive representative shall not:

13 (1) Restrain or coerce child-care providers in the exercise of the rights
14 guaranteed them by law. However, a labor organization may prescribe its own
15 rules with respect to the acquisition or retention of membership, provided such
16 rules are not discriminatory.

17 (2) Cause or attempt to cause the state to discriminate against a
18 child-care provider in violation of this section.

19 (3) Discriminate against a child-care provider with respect to whom
20 membership in the organization has been denied or terminated on some ground

1 other than a failure to tender periodic dues and initiation fees required as a
2 condition of acquiring or maintaining membership.

3 (4) Refuse to bargain in good faith with the state.

4 § 3614. GENERAL PROVISIONS

5 (a) Cost items agreed upon in collective bargaining between the parties
6 shall be submitted for inclusion in the governor's budget within 10 days after
7 the date on which an agreement is executed by the parties. If the general
8 assembly rejects any of the cost items submitted, all the cost items shall be
9 returned to the parties to the agreement for further bargaining. If the general
10 assembly appropriates sufficient funds, the agreement shall become effective at
11 the beginning of the next fiscal year. If the general assembly appropriates a
12 different amount of funds, the terms of the agreement affected by that
13 appropriation shall be renegotiated based on the amount of funds actually
14 appropriated and the new agreement shall become effective at the beginning of
15 the next fiscal year.

16 (b) The activities of child-care providers and their exclusive representatives
17 authorized by this chapter shall be afforded state-action immunity under
18 applicable state and federal anti-trust laws.

1 § 3615. RIGHTS UNALTERED

2 This chapter does not alter or infringe upon the rights of:

3 (1) A parent or legal guardian to select or discontinue child-care services
4 of any child-care provider.

5 (2) A parent or legal guardian to negotiate child-care services not
6 regulated by the state.

7 (3) A child-care center to choose, direct, or terminate the services of any
8 child-care worker in its center.

9 (4) The general assembly and the judiciary to make modifications to the
10 delivery of state services through child-care subsidy programs, including
11 eligibility standards for families, legal guardians, and child-care providers
12 participating in child-care subsidy programs and the nature of the services
13 provided.

14 (5) Nothing in this chapter shall affect the rights and obligations of
15 private sector employer and employees under the National Labor Relations Act
16 (29 U.S.C. § 151 et seq.). The terms and conditions of employment at
17 individual child-care centers, which are the subject of traditional collective
18 bargaining between employers and employees and are governed by federal
19 law, fall outside the limited scope of bargaining as it is defined in this chapter.

1 § 3616. SEVERABILITY

2 If any of the provisions of this act or its application is held invalid as it
3 relates to state law or federal funding requirements, the invalidity shall not
4 affect other provisions of this act which can be given effect without the invalid
5 provision or application, and to this end, the provisions of this act are
6 severable.