

Date of Hearing: July 1, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Darshana R. Patel, Chair

SB 902 (Grayson) – As Amended June 3, 2026

[This bill was double referred to the Committee on Human Services and was heard by that Committee on issues in its jurisdiction.]

SENATE VOTE: 36-0

SUBJECT: Early childhood education and childcare: electronic signatures

SUMMARY: Clarifies that an electronic signature in compliance with the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) may satisfy signatures required by the Early Education Act and the Child Care and Development Services Act. Authorizes documents with an electronic signature to be created and stored in an electronic format in compliance with the UETA and authorizes the California Department of Social Services (DSS) to adopt regulations to implement this bill.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes preschool providers holding California State Preschool Program (CSPP) contracts with the California Department of Education (CDE), pursuant to the Early Education Act, to use an electronic rather than a digital signature in maintaining electronic records.
- 2) Requires that the use of an electronic signature have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature if the signature meets the requirements of the UETA.
- 3) Authorizes childcare providers under the purview of the DSS to satisfy the requirement for a signature with the use of an electronic signature, provided the signature meets the requirements of the UETA.
- 4) Authorizes required documentation containing an electronic signature to be created and stored in an electronic format in compliance with the UETA.
- 5) Makes conforming changes to the Education Code to update the term “digital signature” to “electronic signature” and to refer to the UETA.
- 6) Authorizes the DSS to adopt regulations to implement these provisions, including standards for authentication, consent, and record retention.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Early Education Act to provide an inclusive and cost-effective California State preschool program (CSPP) that provides high-quality learning experiences, coordinated services, and referrals for families to access health and social-emotional support services through full- and part-day programs. (Education Code (EC) 8200 & 8201)
- 2) Authorizes, but does not require, contractors operating or providing services under the Early Education Act to maintain records electronically in compliance with state and federal

standards, as determined by the CDE, and requires the conversion from a paper record to an electronic format, as well as the storage of the electronic record, to comply with the minimum standards for trustworthy electronic document or record preservation pursuant to statutory and regulatory requirements. (EC 8234)

- 3) Authorizes contractors operating or providing services under the Early Education Act to use a digital signature that complies with state and federal standards, that is either computer generated or produced by electronic means and is intended by the signatory to have the same effect as a handwritten signature. Requires that the use of a digital signature to have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature, provided the requirements for digital signatures, as specified, are satisfied. (EC 8234)
- 4) Authorizes contractors operating or providing services under the Early Education Act to use digital forms to allow families to apply for services if those forms comply with state and federal standards. (EC 8235)
- 5) Provides that, in any written communication with a public entity, as defined, in which a signature is required or used, any party to the communication may affix a signature by use of a digital signature, which has the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature, if all of the following attributes are met:
 - a) It is unique to the person using it;
 - b) It is capable of verification;
 - c) It is under the sole control of the person using it;
 - d) It is linked to data in such a manner that if the data are changed, the digital signature is invalidated; and
 - e) It conforms to regulations adopted by the Secretary of State, as specified. (Government Code (GOV) 16.5)
- 6) Provides that an acceptable digital signature technology must be capable of creating signatures that conform to GOV 16.5. (2 California Code of Regulations (CCR) 22002)
- 7) Defines “digital signature” as an electronic identifier, created by a computer, intended by the party using it to have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature. Provides that a digital signature is a type of “electronic signature.” (GOV 16.5(d))
- 8) Establishes UETA, which applies to electronic records and electronic signatures relating to a transaction. (Civil Code (CIV) 1633.1)
- 9) Defines “electronic signature” as an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with an electronic record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the electronic record. Specifies a “digital signature” is a type of electronic signature. (CIV 1633.2(h))
- 10) Defines “electronic record” as a record created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means. (CIV 1633.2(g))

- 11) Specifies the circumstances under which an electronic record may satisfy a legal requirement for a record to be retained. (CIV 1633.12)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Families accessing subsidized childcare vouchers must submit multiple forms throughout the year, including eligibility applications, updates to work or school schedules, changes to providers, and corrections to attendance records. Paper-based processes require printing, mailing, or hand-delivering documents, which can be burdensome for parents juggling multiple jobs, caring for young children, or facing transportation or housing challenges. Missing or delayed signatures can slow access to care or stall reimbursement to providers for families using vouchers. This reliance on paper not only creates administrative inefficiencies but also treats voucher families as second-class participants in the childcare market, limiting their access to high-quality care and the same convenience and flexibility available to families paying privately. While current law generally recognizes digital and electronic signatures, the Child Care and Development Services Act (WIC Part 1.8) does not explicitly authorize current electronic options for signage or storage. This gap forces contractors serving families to rely on paper forms and in-person signatures, creating hurdles for families with inconsistent schedules or limited access to technology.

SB 902 updates subsidized childcare paperwork practices by specifying that a signature required by the Child Care and Development Services Act may be satisfied by an electronic signature in compliance with the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA). Additionally, the bill authorizes the Department of Social Services to adopt regulations to implement these provisions. By aligning subsidized childcare paperwork with common practices already used in housing and health care, the bill supports timely access to care and strengthens family economic stability and workforce participation.”

Electronic signatures. An electronic signature refers to an electronic method indicating intent to sign a document, which may include typing a name, drawing on a screen, or clicking an “I agree” button. A digital signature is a highly secure, specific type of electronic signature that uses cryptography to verify the signer’s identity and ensure the document hasn’t been tampered with.

Existing law, UETA, provides that a record or signature may not be denied legal effect or enforceability solely because it is in electronic form. UETA further provides that an electronic signature satisfies any legal requirement for a signature if the parties to a transaction have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Signature requirements in childcare. California regulations require contractors operating childcare centers or family childcare homes to use daily sign-in/sign-out sheets as a primary source document for audit and reimbursement purposes. According to the CDE, effective January 1, 2017, childcare contractors may use a digital signature, including for sign-in/sign-outs at childcare programs, provided the signature meets the technology requirements. *This bill* clarifies that an electronic signature in compliance with UETA, rather than a digital signature, meets the requirements for signatures required by the Early Education Act governing the California State Preschool Program (CSPP).

Arguments in support. Early Edge California writes, “Families relying on subsidized childcare are frequently required to complete and submit documentation to maintain eligibility, yet outdated processes that require in-person or paper signatures create avoidable challenges. For working parents, particularly those with nontraditional schedules, limited transportation, or living in rural communities, these requirements can result in delays, missed work, and even disruptions in care. When paperwork is delayed, providers also experience delays in reimbursement, further destabilizing an already fragile system.

By allowing electronic signatures while maintaining paper options, SB 902 offers a practical, low-cost solution that aligns with how families already access services across health care, housing, and employment. Streamlining these processes will help ensure families remain connected to care, support timely payments for providers, and improve the state’s ability to efficiently utilize existing childcare funding.”

Related legislation. SB 140 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review) Chapter 193, Statutes of 2023, a budget trailer bill, authorized a childcare provider to submit a monthly attendance record without a parent’s signature when the parent has not communicated with the provider for a minimum of seven consecutive days, the provider has notified the county or Alternative Payment Program (APP) agency of the parent’s lack of communication, and the county or APP agency has documented the provider’s unsuccessful attempts to collect a signature.

AB 865 (Quirk-Silva) of the 2021-22 Session, would have, among other things, authorized APPs and providers operating or providing services to use an electronic signature that complies with state and federal standards instead of a digital signature to have the same effect as a handwritten or manual signature. This bill was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

This bill requires APPs to reimburse childcare providers based on the maximum certified hours of need rather than attendance, and amends statute regarding verification of provider rates, APP fund reserves, and acceptable forms of signature.

In recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on childcare providers, I have provided substantial funding over the last two budgets so providers are reimbursed based on enrollment, not on attendance. However, I cannot support a permanent extension of that policy at this time, as it will result in significant ongoing General Fund cost pressures in the tens of millions of dollars that were not included in the state's current spending plan.

AB 131 (Committee on Budget) Chapter 116, Statutes of 2021, a budget trailer bill, allowed APPs and childcare providers, from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, or through the end of the state of emergency declared by the Governor in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, whichever period is shorter, to submit attendance records for reimbursements without a parent or guardian signature, subject to applicable guidance issued by the CDSS or the CDE.

SB 820 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review) Chapter 110, Statutes of 2020, a budget trailer bill, allowed APPs and childcare providers, through June 30, 2021, to submit attendance records for reimbursements without a parent or guardian signature if the parent was unable to sign due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

AB 1712 (Obernolte) Chapter 324, Statutes of 2016, expanded authority for all childcare contractors (not just APPs) to use digital signatures and required that those signatures have the same force and effect as manual signatures.

AB 2296 (Low) Chapter 144, Statutes of 2016, clarified that a “digital signature” is also a type of electronic signature for purposes of the UETA.

AB 271 (Obernolte) Chapter 476, Statutes of 2015, authorized APPs and childcare providers to maintain electronic records, and authorized APPs to use digital signatures.

AB 274 (Bonilla) Chapter 733, Statutes of 2013, allowed APPs to maintain electronic records but prohibited documents or records created in paper form from being scanned and stored electronically. Records created in paper form were required to be stored in their original paper format.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

4C's Alameda
Alameda County Office of Education
Bananas
California Child Care Resource and Referral Network
California State PTA
Catalyst Family
Changing Tides Family Services
Child Action
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Child Care Resource Center
Child Development Associates
Child Development Incorporated
Child Development Resources of Ventura County
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County
Community Resources for Children
Connections for Children
Crystal Stairs
Del Norte Child Care Council
Early Care and Education Consortium
Early Edge California
Every Child California
Family Resource Center
Glide Foundation
Go Kids
Head Start California
Hively
Kidango
Kindercare Learning Companies
Kindersystems
Low Income Investment Fund

Marin Child Care Council
MCT Technology
North Coast Opportunities
Pathways LA
Sierra Nevada Children's Services
Solano Family & Children's Services
Thriving Families CA Foundation
Thriving Families California
YMCA of San Diego County

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Debbie Look / ED. / (916) 319-2087