

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2511

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to child care center licensing requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning child care center licensing requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Pike, Scott, Vick, Shea, Walsh and Young.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/26/16, 1/29/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows licensed child care centers to serve children enrolled in kindergarten in a mixed group or classroom, excluding classrooms which serve infants not walking independently.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Kilduff, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Sawyer, Scott and Walkinshaw.

Staff: Ashley Paintner (786-7120).

Background:

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is responsible for establishing licensing requirements for child care centers. Child care centers provide regularly scheduled care for children 1 month of age through 12 years of age for periods less than 24 hours. The DEL allows child care centers to combine children of different ages in mixed groups or classrooms, excluding school-age children. Therefore, a child care center may not serve 5 year olds who are attending elementary school in a mixed group with 5 year olds who are not

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attending elementary school. The DEL allows providers to request a waiver to mixed group limitations so long as the provider maintains staff-to-child ratio requirements.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Licensed child care centers may serve children enrolled in kindergarten in a mixed group or classroom, excluding classrooms which serve infants not walking independently. By November 1, 2016, the DEL must amend the rules necessary to implement this requirement. Staff-to-child ratio requirements are not changed.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill allows licensed child care centers to serve children enrolled in kindergarten in a mixed group or classroom, whereas the original bill only allowed 5 year olds to be served in a mixed group or classroom. Additionally, the substitute bill clarifies that kindergartners cannot be served in the same classroom with infants not walking independently.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Child care center owners have expressed concerns about the school-age limitation for mixed groups, especially smaller facilities that serve a small number of children. The current rule requires child care centers to hire extra staff in order to serve 5 year olds enrolled in school in a separate group from the other children. Although the DEL offers a waiver, the process takes months and during that time these centers have to employ extra staff to stay in compliance with their license requirements. For many working-class families, child care expenses are one of their highest monthly payments. Every family deserves to have quality child care despite their income level. The agency rule doesn't make sense and common sense would tell us that 5 year olds in school can be safely served with 5 year olds not yet enrolled in elementary school.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pike, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.