
Children, Youth & Families Committee

HB 1843

Brief Description: Concerning licensing requirements for child care centers and indoor early learning programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Eslick, Dent, Abbarno and Sutherland.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes minimum child-to-staff ratio requirements for child care centers and square footage requirements for licensed indoor early learning programs.

Hearing Date: 1/26/22

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) regulates child care licensing and is responsible for maintaining a set of core competencies for child care and early learning providers.

Licensing Standards.

In 2015 the Legislature directed the Department of Early Learning, which is now the DCYF, to produce a single set of licensing standards for child care, including family home and center providers. The licensing standards must:

- provide minimum health and safety standards for child care and preschool programs;
- rely on the standards established in the Early Achievers program to address quality issues;
- take into account the separate needs of family care providers and child care centers; and
- promote the continued safety of child care settings.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

It is the Secretary of the DCYF's duty with regard to licensing to do the following:

- in consultation and with the advice and assistance of representatives of the various agencies to be licensed, designate categories of child care facilities or outdoor locations for which separate or different requirements must be developed;
- consult with the State Fire Marshal's Office, and use an interagency process to address health and safety requirements for child care programs that serve school-age children and are operated in buildings that contain public or private schools that safely serve children during times in which school is in session; and
- adopt and publish minimum requirements for licensing applicable to each of the various categories of agencies to be licensed.

Licenses must specify the category of child care that an agency is authorized to render and the ages and number of children to be served.

The DCYF has adopted the following child-to-staff requirements for child care centers in rule:

- In each classroom or well-defined space, the maximum group size and ratio of center staff members to children, including children related to staff or the licensee, must be:
 - preschoolers (30 months through age 6 who are not attending kindergarten or elementary school) with a maximum group size of 20 with a ratio of 1:10; and
 - school-age children (ages 5 through 12 who are enrolled in or attending kindergarten or elementary school) with a maximum group size of 30 with a ratio of 1:15.

In rule, the DCYF requires licensed indoor early learning program spaces to have a minimum of 35 square feet per child in attendance.

Summary of Bill:

Minimum child-to-staff ratio requirements for child care centers are established as follows:

- In each classroom or well-defined space of a child care center, the maximum group size and ratio of center staff members to children, including children related to staff or the licensee, must be:
 - preschoolers (30 months through age 6 who are not attending kindergarten or elementary school) with a maximum group size of 21 with a ratio of no less than one to 11; and
 - school-age children (age 5 through 12 who are enrolled in or attending kindergarten or elementary school) with a maximum group size of 31 with a ratio of no less than one to 16.

Licensed indoor early learning program space must have a minimum of 34 square feet per child in attendance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2022.

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