
**Human Services, Youth, & Early
Learning Committee**

HB 1537

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

Sponsors: Representatives Couture, Griffey, Abbarno, Christian, Schmidt, Volz, Chambers, Eslick and Walsh.

Brief Summary of Bill

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

Hearing Date: 2/17/23

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) regulates child care licensing. In general, it is unlawful for any person or business to provide child care services for a child outside the child's own home unless licensed by the DCYF. The DCYF must maintain licensing standards that:

- provide minimum licensing requirements;
- rely on the standards established in the Early Achievers program to address quality issues;
- take into account the separate needs of family care providers, outdoor nature-based child 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.

Licenses issued by the DCYF must specify the category of child care that an agency is authorized to render and the ages and number of children to be served. In establishing licensing standards, the DCYF has adopted rules outlining staff-to-child ratio requirements for child care centers. 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:

- for preschoolers (30 months through age 6 who are not attending kindergarten or elementary school), a ratio of one to 10 with a maximum group size of 20; and
- for school-age children (ages 5 through 12 who are enrolled in or attending kindergarten or elementary school), a ratio of one to 15 with a maximum group size of 30.

Also 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:

Statutory minimum staff-to-child ratio requirements for child care centers are established. 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:

- for preschoolers (30 months through age 6 who are not attending kindergarten or elementary school), a ratio of no less than one to 11 with a maximum group size of 21; and
- for school-age children (age 5 through 12 who are enrolled in or attending kindergarten or elementary school), a ratio of no less than one to 16 with a maximum group size of 31.

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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