Child Care Ratios:
Texas Must Address Safety and Learning in Child Care Settings

Background

Quality early child care and education has been proven to provide a great return on investment. Child to caregiver ratios and overall group sizes in child care are key elements of safety and quality in these early learning environments.

In 2010, the Child Care Licensing Division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services concluded, "…. **the agency does not believe that the current standards for group size….or ratios adequately protect the health and safety of children in some age ranges."** Despite this finding, ratios and group size standards have not changed, leaving children in regulated facilities at risk.

Current ratio standards for the State of Texas versus those recommended by the American Association of Pediatrics and the National Association for the Education of Young Children for selected age ranges are as follows:

Age	DFPS Current Standard	American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Standard	National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standard
2-year-olds	1:11	1:5	1:6
3-year-olds	1:15	1:7	1:9

How Texas Compares to Other States in Certain Age Ranges

- ✓ **2-year-olds: Texas is ranked 49th –** tied with Florida for having the **second highest ratios** behind only Mississippi and Louisiana.
- ✓ **3-year-olds: Texas is ranked 50th** – tied with North Carolina, Georgia and Florida for having the **very highest ratios.**

Why It Matters

- ✓ **Child Care IS Early Learning**
  - If the state wants to see a better return on its investment in early learning, which leads to a more prepared future workforce, it must strengthen child care in addition to pre-K in Texas. A child's brain grows to roughly 85 percent of its full capacity in the first five years of life, so it is critical that we take advantage of this window.
  - Children in classrooms with lower group sizes and fewer children per adult were more ready for school, had better language comprehension and had fewer behavior problems,

which leads to more success throughout life. These ratios impact children of all socio-economic levels in licensed child care and preschool in our state.

- ✓ **Low ratios decreases the likelihood of injuries**
  - The Sunset Advisory Commission Department of Family and Protective Services 2014 Staff Report shows that inadequate supervision is the third highest violation in licensed centers. Research shows that when caregivers have fewer children to supervise and the group size is limited, the likelihood of injuries and illness in children decreases and opportunities for positive interaction with children increase. Excessive numbers of young children increase the danger of high caregiver stress and loss of control.

Policy Recommendation

The Legislature should direct DFPS to convene a group of providers and advocates to study best practices and other states to determine safe and reasonable ratios and groups sizes for Texas' licensed child care facilities. Reduced ratios shall be phased-in by 2020. The Texas Workforce Commission should give local workforce development boards more flexibility to increase reimbursement rates for providers in the subsidy program, and should also reimburse providers at a rate equal to or above the 75th percentile of local market rate.

Most centers already perform better than the state's requirements. After the last change to ratios over a decade ago, there was no significant impact to the child care industry, nor was there any significant decline in the industry after child care worker training standards were raised in 2011. Based on the experience of other states and surveys of current practices of Texas providers, we believe ratios can be changed without harm to the industry or excessive cost to families.

Please ensure that children in licensed child care have safe, quality learning environments. Help our children, our families, and the future of our state.

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A list of some of the organizations that support this change include:

Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Association for the Education of Young Children
Texas League of Women Voters
Texas Association for Infant Mental Health
Collaborative for Children
Dallas Child Care Alliance
One Voice Texas
Voices for Children San Antonio