

## Support HB 3322 by Rep. Alvarado

### Reduce Child Care Ratios to Support Early Learning & Child Safety

Research shows that child to caregiver ratios in child care centers is one of the most important indicators of quality. Yet some Texas children – particularly those who are from low-income families and have the greatest need for positive experiences in child care – are stuck in large classes.

If a single child care teacher is responsible for 11 two-year-olds – as permitted by the State of Texas – then it's difficult to prevent injuries, read a book or provide other engaging activities that offer the nurturing support young children need during this important period of brain development.

#### Current Ratio Standards in Texas Compared to Best Practices

Though the bills would not reduce ratios to AAP standards, the following chart shows the significant gap between best practices and current state requirements.

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

#### Texas Child Care Ratios Threaten Early Learning and Child Safety

In 2010, DFPS 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 at risk. In fact, inadequate supervision is the third most frequently cited violation by inspectors, behind inadequate background checks for employees.

Children in classrooms with low group sizes and ratios are more ready for school, have better language comprehension, and have fewer behavior problems.

#### HB 3322:

The bill would direct DFPS to study best practices and other states' experiences to determine safe and reasonable ratios and group sizes for Texas' licensed child care facilities. Reduced ratios for ages 18 months to 5 years would be phased in by 2020, with a limitation that no more than three children per age group can be reduced.

Governor Abbott has proclaimed early education to be an emergency item for the legislative session. Since child care is a critical time and place for kids, we urge the legislature to address child care standards along with pre-K, to ensure that all of our early learning environments are high quality.

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