



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA**

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Mary Swingle

April 5, 2022

Rep. Dave Pinto, Chair
House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
State Office Building, 503
St. Paul, MN 55155

Mr. Chair and members,

On behalf of certified, license-exempt childcare providers across the state, I thank you for including a language change to ratio and group size in your upcoming omnibus bill proposal. This important addition to the existing statute will allow the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services to increase the maximum group size to no more than 40 children, and increase the staff-to-child ratio to 1:20 for certified, license-exempt childcare centers during national security, peacetime, or pandemic-related public health emergencies.

As the pandemic set in, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota kept our doors open. We provided a safe space for the children of healthcare, emergency, and other essential workers to be cared for while their parents were at work. We did this work safely, effectively, and at no cost to families. Our only impediment for helping these families was the number of staff on hand. If we were short on staff due to COVID-related illness, or staff's own childcare issues, then we had to reduce child capacity to comply with state law.

In the unfortunate event of another pandemic, or other statewide emergency, this amendment would allow us, and organizations like ours, to be flexible and serve the most families possible. At Boys & Girls Clubs, our number one priority is safety. We understand that increasing group size and ratio is a last resort to be used in the face of another terrible situation; however, we know now, that these are the types of things we should plan and have options for.

Thank you to our bill author, Rep. Dan Wolgamott, for his foresight and incredible support, and thank you to the committee for hearing our testimony earlier this spring. If you require additional information, please feel free to contact me at 320-257-5112 or mswingle@bgcmn.org.

Sincerely,

Mary Swingle
President/CEO