

April 14, 2026

MN House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee

Public Testimony - HF# 4382

Committee Chairs, Members of the Committee:

I am Lisa Thompson, our state's Ombuds for Family Child Care Providers. The testimony I bring to you today is based on the input I have received from family child care license holders across the state. I have gathered stories and comments through multiple in-person meetings with provider groups and direct outreach from individuals concerned about their ability to continue operating their businesses. This testimony is specific to the section of the bill regarding the proposed changes affecting family child care.

Family child care is the unique option for families within our early learning system and the most affordable way to deliver this essential part of our state's economic infrastructure. It's in the name - **family** child care provides young children a family-like experience. While the goals are the same as other care and education options, family child care provides little ones the secure relationship-based care that is so vital to their healthy development. Siblings stay together. Community connections are strengthened. The littles learn from older children. The older children learn valuable lessons being around the littles, too. While these environments mirror home-life, we should not undervalue the skills and the expertise family child care providers bring to their work.

This work to modernize state licensing rules is important but the problems with our childcare system will not be solved until the Legislature also makes significant and meaningful changes to how regulations are imposed. The system is problematic as it sits today and adding more regulations will I'm afraid only make things worse. Here are some examples of specifics in this bill that will either help or further hurt family child care.

Examples of helpful changes:

- Changes to the ratios and capacity numbers are the single most commonly praised item in this bill. And the changes are a prime example of how important it is for the state's regulators to involve and listen to the people directly impacted when making changes.
- Putting all the regulations in one place. When we take into consideration that there is little to no regulatory training for license holders, you can understand the importance of at least having the rules in a single place.
- Removing the requirement to have a landline telephone and allowing electronic documentation – moving away from paper documents - are great examples of regulations finally bringing us into the 21st century.

Examples of hurtful changes:

- Failing to remove all areas of "nuance" in the regulations leaves license holders in the untenable position that is driving people away from this work. For example, adding a word like "immediately" to the supervision requirement is an impossible standard to meet. I am confident the Legislature would never want the rule to become more important than the purpose – children's care and education.
- Each added requirement for documentation, and there are a lot of them in this bill, takes the adult's attention away from the children and opens yet another window for the regulatory punishments that are pushing people out of doing this work.

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- Adding rules that are appropriate in a child care center environment but do not make sense in family environments. For example, stringent cleaning protocols are appropriate with large groups of unrelated children but not small sibling groups; and requiring that the commissioner have access even when children aren't present is appropriate in a commercial setting but not a private home.
- Requiring all adults to have clearance from a medical and mental health professional before working with children is an unreasonable imposition when we consider the challenges people face accessing affordable health care. The regulations currently allow licensors to order an exam when there's a question about the provider's fitness and would continue to be sufficient.

While there are areas that need to be updated to be responsive to our modern lives, new additional requirements should be avoided wherever possible for this already highly regulated license.

The voice and input of parents who use child care services has not been sufficiently included in these new rules proposed. Regulations should not simply make the regulators' jobs easier. The state is respectfully asked to continue working on the rules that help keep families working, children learning, and small businesses thriving.

Support families with young children by protecting their options and their choices without adding more burdensome requirements for license holders. Support our children by providing a regulatory environment that truly prioritizes their learning and development. Support the people doing the work by listening to and valuing the providers' and parents' input on the regulations imposed by the Legislature.

Thank you for considering the voices of Minnesota family child care providers. I welcome the opportunity to be a resource to the committee and members.

Respectfully,

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