

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2511

As of February 23, 2016

Title: An act relating to child care center licensing requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning child care center licensing requirements.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Pike, Scott, Vick, Shea, Walsh and Young).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/10/16, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/22/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: The Department of Early Learning (DEL) oversees child care licensing. Child day care centers or child care centers are agencies that regularly provide early childhood education and early learning services for a group of children for periods of less than 24 hours. Under DEL's rules, child care centers have staff-to-child ratios depending on the age of children.

If age of the children is:	Then the staff to child ratio is:	And the maximum group size is:
(a) One month, through 11 months (infant)	1:4	8
(b) Twelve months through 29 months (toddler)	1:7	14
(c) Thirty months through six years not attending kindergarten or elementary school (preschool age child)	1:10	20
(d) Five years through 12 years attending kindergarten or elementary school (school-age child)	1:15	30

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Excluding infants not walking independently, DEL's rules allow child care centers to have mixed-age groups if certain requirements are met. However, mixed groups must not include school-age children. The effect is that child care providers may not serve children attending school in the same group as children of the same age not attending school.

In individual cases, DEL may waive a specific licensing requirement and can approve an alternate method to achieve a licensing requirement if there is good reason and other requirements are met.

Current law defines school-age child as a child who is between the ages of five years and 12 years and is attending a public or private school or is receiving home-based instruction.

Summary of Bill: Licensed child care centers may serve children enrolled in kindergarten in a mixed group or classroom, excluding classrooms which serve infants not walking independently. By November 1, 2016, DEL must amend rules necessary to implement this section. This section does not remove or change staff-to-child ratio requirements.

The definition of school-age child is amended to mean a child who is five years of age through 12 years of age.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Under current regulations, child care providers would need to have two separate classrooms and staff members for five-year-olds attending school and five-year-olds not attending school even though they are under the staff-to-child ratio. This rule raises the cost of child care, which is a burden to families, especially the poorest families. The bill also contains a technical clean-up to the definition.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Pike, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.