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The Michigan League for Public Policy is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization that promotes economic opportunity for all and analyzes the impact of public policy and budget decisions on the lives of Michiganders who have been systemically left out of prosperity. The League is also the state's Kids Count organization, working as part of a national effort to measure child well-being at the state and local levels and use that information to shape public policies and programs to improve the lives of children and their families.

While the proposed rule changes for family and group child care homes include a number of positive and necessary revisions, we have concerns about the changes proposed to increase the ratios and allow minors to serve as staff and volunteers in an unsupervised capacity.

#### R 400.1920 Child care staff member: employment requirements

The proposed rule decreases the minimum age for child care staff members and unsupervised volunteers from 18 to 16, allowing unsupervised minors to be counted in staff-to-child ratios. The Regulatory Impact Statement claims the proposed staffing requirements are “somewhat similar” to many of our peer states, but in fact none of the comparison states allow an unsupervised minor to care for children in licensed settings. Notably, the rule proposes to include these unsupervised minors in staff-to-child ratios.

#### R 400.1927 Ratio rule of staff to children in family child care homes

Research to date suggests lower ratios and smaller group sizes lead to more positive caregiving, better cognitive outcomes and less illness among children. The proposed guidelines increase the ratio from one staff member per six children to seven children and lower the ages of infants (from 18 months to 12 months) and toddlers (from 30 months to 24 months) to allow a higher ratio of young children.

The proposed guidelines exceed both the limits of our neighboring states and the guidelines recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the American Public Health Association (APHA).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Prenatal-to-3 Policy Clearinghouse Evidence Review: Child Care Ratios (ER 0920.012A)*. Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, 2020. <http://pn3policy.org/policy-clearinghouse/child-care-ratios>.

Using data to educate, advocate and fight for policy solutions that undo historic and systemic racial and economic inequities to lift up Michiganders who have been left out of prosperity.

Classroom description	IL	IN	MI	MN	OH	PA	WI
2 children, 11 months of age							
2 children, 16 months of age							
3 children, 26 months of age	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

Not only do changes to the ratios undermine safety and quality, but increased ratios and group sizes also contribute to **higher premiums for liability insurance** for providers as well as **higher levels of burnout and turnover** for staff.<sup>2</sup>

#### R 400.1928 Ratio rule of staff to children in group child care homes

In addition to the ratio changes for family homes, the proposed changes for group homes would allow a single staff member to supervise up to 10 children, as long as three were school-age children, including up to four toddlers or two infants and two toddlers.

The proposed rules will allow an unsupervised 16-year-old to act on behalf of the licensee (R 100.1903(1)(b)) by providing direct care and supervision alone on the site to as many as 10 children — including four children under the age of 2 — in a group home or seven children in a family home. Allowing a minor to serve in this capacity would have a number of negative consequences:

- For the children in care, who are receiving a lower quality of care due to the minor’s inexperience responding to the emotional, physical, and safety needs of young children;
- For the minor in charge, who will lack the emotional maturity and experience to handle the complex challenges that inevitably arise while working with young children;
- For adult child care workers, whose wages and working conditions will be eroded; and
- For families, who will be subjected to lower-quality care.

The sector as a whole is already struggling due to low pay for workers, which will only be exacerbated through the further undermining of the profession. This proposal is no doubt an effort to address the very real challenge of recruiting and retaining experienced early childhood educators, but research from NAEYC and the Center for American Progress has found **no correlation** between child care supply and state regulations like ratios, group sizes and teacher qualifications. They conclude, “Lowering the bar on child care by rolling back regulations in an attempt to solve the challenges of supply is misguided and will lead parents to choose between safe child care and affordable child care.”<sup>3</sup>

The true culprit to Michigan’s early childhood workforce shortage is low pay in the sector. The average wage of child care workers in Michigan is less than \$15 an hour.<sup>4</sup> Research from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment shows the early childhood educator workforce faces a poverty rate of 12.3%, 4.2 times higher than elementary and middle school teachers.<sup>5</sup> The solution to the early childhood worker crisis is clear, and it does not require the state to compromise safety or quality.

<sup>2</sup> “The Costs of Deregulating Child Care.” NAEYC, 2024.

[https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-73607/2024naeycderegulationresource\\_final.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-73607/2024naeycderegulationresource_final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> NAEYC, Center for American Progress. “Our Child Care Crisis Is the Result of Underinvestment, Not Overregulation.” February 5, 2020.

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/childcare-underinvestment-not-overregulation>.

<sup>4</sup> “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics: May 2024.” Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.

<https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/area/2600000>.

<sup>5</sup> McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Powell, A., Jaggi, S., Kim, Y., Knight, J., Muñoz, S., & Schlieber, M. (2024). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2024*. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2024/>.

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