

**SALINE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**



We are good for your health!

Administration
785-826-6600
Fax: 785-826-6605

Child Care Services
785-826-6600
Fax: 785-826-6605

Clinic Services
785-826-6602
Fax: 785-826-6619

Home Health Agency
785-826-6606
Fax: 785-826-6652

MCH
785-826-6600
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WIC
785-826-6603
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Saline County Health Department
125 W. Elm
Salina, KS 67401

Good morning:

I am writing to you to express my concern regarding Senate Bill 282. I have been a Child Care Licensing Surveyor for the Saline County Health Department for 31 years. My educational background is in elementary and early childhood education as well as business and psychology. I am the Child Care Licensing Coordinator for Saline, Ottawa, and McPherson Counties.

Please remember that the current child care regulations are set as minimum standards. When early childhood professionals follow Kansas child care regulations children will be safe and healthy, but there may not be quality programming or engaging, stimulating environments. Lowering these minimum standards will be detrimental to children's well-being, mental health, safety, and education. Why would anyone propose less care by less qualified caregivers for Kansas children?

Many child care professionals enter the field with no formal early childhood background or training. Caring for children with a large age span from newborns to 12-years of age is not an easy task and requires knowledge in developmentally appropriate practices, child development, caring for neurodivergent children, behavior and guidance techniques, business practices, health and nutrition, social-emotional development and much more. Currently child care professionals have a core set of health and safety courses they must take at initial application to ensure they have basic knowledge and competency when caring for children. Sixteen hours of continuing education annually assures child care professionals are receiving more than the minimum training, helps them connect with other professionals, advances their own growth as teachers and business owners, and enables child care professionals to learn the best techniques and practices to care for children in a healthy, safe, and stimulating manner.

Best practice in early childhood states small staff/child ratios as an indication of quality care. Increasing the staff/child ratios as proposed in bill 282 distances Kansas child care regulations even further from quality child care. Allowing more children with one home child care professional could have devastating consequences. How will one caregiver evacuate four infants and four other children 5 years of age and younger in a fire? How will one care giver safely and with good supervision take four infants and four children 5 years of age and younger outside daily? The proposed ratio and capacity changes are

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setting child care professionals up to fail and places our most vulnerable Kansas citizens at risk.

Removing local, public health Child Care Surveyors from the licensing process is a mistake. No one knows the systems and specific community needs like local Surveyors. I serve on community task forces, meet with chamber of commerce officials, work with local building services and fire inspectors and most importantly have relationships with the people in the three communities I serve. As a local I can identify local solutions and partnerships which enables me to connect agencies, facilities and communities to early childhood programs and resources. As a local Surveyor I can respond in a quick and timely manner to a crisis, complaint or to offer assistance/support.

I understand the child care crisis families and employers are facing, but Kansas should not prioritize slots over children or there will be a different kind of crisis...more child deaths, injuries, and less kindergarten readiness. Please consider more reasonable, quality focused, and safe measures to meet the child care need.

Sincerely,

Leigh Ann Montoy

Child Care Licensing Coordinator