

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Sophie Walsh 271-3469

HB 1771-FN, removing prospective repeal of child care staffing ratios and the associated waiver system and requiring the department of health and human services to provide certain notice regarding availability of the waiver.

Hearing Date: March 25, 2026

Time Opened: 10:22 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:25 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Rochefort, Birdsell and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: Senators Avard and Prentiss

Bill Analysis: This bill repeals the prospective repeal of child care staffing ratios and the associated waiver system. The bill also requires the department of health and human services to provide annual notice to child care providers of the option to request a waiver of the child care staffing requirements.

Sponsors:

Rep. Peternel

Rep. Drye

Who supports the bill: Rep. Katy Peternel, Rep. Debra DeSimone, Rep. Margaret Drye, Scott Burns, and Linda Holstein Stronge.

Who opposes the bill: No one.

Who is neutral on the bill: No one.

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Katy Peternel, Carroll – District 6

- Representative Peternel explained that this bill originally came about in 2024 as a result of the House Special Committee on Child Care.
- A temporary waiver was enacted for child care facilities to increase their staffing ratios, allowing them to have one or two more students per caregiver. This waiver was temporary to ensure there would be no adverse consequences.
- This bill eliminates the sunset on this waiver and requires annual notice of this option to licensed child care providers.
- Representative Peternel referenced a report submitted to the Committee, highlighting that there were only five waiver applications last year, three of

which were granted and two that were withdrawn at the request of the child care center.

Representative Debra DeSimone, Rockingham – District 18

- Representative DeSimone explained that the Special Committee on Child Care has done a lot of research on this topic. To date, they have received zero complaints about this practice taking place.
- Child care facilities take great care to ensure that staffing ratios are safe for children.
- Repealing this sunset on the waiver and allowing child care facilities to make their decisions would be proper legislation.