

HOUSE BILL NO. 422

INTRODUCED BY T. FALK, S. GIST, L. SHELDON-GALLOWAY, T. BROCKMAN, G. KMETZ, D. EMRICH

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT DIRECTING AN AMENDMENT TO ARM 27.95.623 TO REVISE THE CHILD-TO-STAFF RATIOS AND MAXIMUM GROUP SIZES FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS AND PROVIDE FOR A HIGHER CHILD-TO-STAFF RATIO DURING NAP TIMES PROVIDED CERTAIN CONDITIONS ARE MET."

WHEREAS, the proposed changes to the child-to-staff ratios and maximum group sizes for child care centers more closely align with the guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes would benefit the child care industry in Montana by opening up more child care spots in communities across the state while still aligning with the STARS to Quality level 5 standards from the Department of Public Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, child care centers would see increased revenue, which would allow the child care providers to increase their employees' wages without increasing tuition rates for families; and

WHEREAS, at least 21 other states have adopted child care regulations that provide flexibilities during children's nap times, including Wyoming, Colorado, Mississippi, Texas, Alaska, and others; and

WHEREAS, the additional flexibilities at nap time would benefit the child care industry in Montana by allowing lead staff to meet, plan, and collaborate during nap time and would reduce payroll costs by eliminating the need to schedule lead staff planning time each week while those staff are not included in the ratio, all while supporting a safe nap environment with sufficient supervision; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes would allow child care centers to increase access and affordability to child care for Montana families, help child care providers to attract and retain staff, and support quality improvement in child care programs, while still aligning with state and industry standards.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

