

HCS HB 32 -- CHILD CARE FACILITIES

SPONSOR: Walsh (50)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 6 to 4. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Legislative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 32.

This bill states that children five years of age or older who are related to the operator of a licensed in-home or group-home day care are not to be counted when calculating the maximum number of children allowed under the license. This is similar to language that was repealed in HB 397 from 2019.

This bill is similar to HB 1257 (2020).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that while it is important to have limits on the number of children that may be watched, this bill rectifies any unintended consequence that previous legislation imposed on licensed childcare facilities by providing a more equitable exemption similar to that of a unlicensed facility. Currently there is a childcare deficiency and this bill will be a tool that might help alleviate some of that.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Walsh; Art Pistario; Alicia Unverferth; Deborah A. George; Mona Shuck, Noah's Ark Daycare; Sarah Vincent; Sherry Shive; Cathy Wagner; Rebecca (Becky) Otto; Jamie Luetkemeyer; Craig Luetkemeyer; Jessica Stultz; Randa Hotop; and Jean Lessly.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that when changing ratio's the primary focus should be on the safety and welfare of the children. Current Missouri law is in alignment with other states and having an unlimited count of related children would be very detrimental. Opponents agree that there is a child care crisis, but this bill would not be the proper resolution to that crisis.

Testifying against the bill were BJC Healthcare Children's Hospital; Missouri Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics; Children's Trust Fund; Child Care Aware of Missouri; Kids Win

Missouri; Kylee M. Strough, United Way of Greater St. Joseph; Missouri Kids First a/k/a Missouri Network of Child Advocacy Centers; and Shelley Blecha.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say there has been a tentative decrease in childcare deaths since 2018, although the current childcare crisis has increased the chances of a child being left in an unsafe environment.

Testifying on the bill was Office of Child Advocate.