

Support for Governor's Child Care Licensing Request SF5385
House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee
April 7, 2024



Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Child Care Association (MCCA) I write to express our full support of the child care licensing weighted risk system request included in SF5385. This support is needed to actually implement and finish part of the work funded by the legislature in the 2021 Regulation Modernization Project.

MCCA is strongly supportive of the multi-year Regulation Modernization Project, and was instrumental in making sure that it included both family and center-based child care providers when passed. Provider frustration has steadily risen as more information has been made available to the public – rightfully so – while there is little differentiation among violations for those viewing public records. A citation online for “hazardous materials available to children” can mean myriad things, from a small hole in a reading nook pillow to bottles of dangerous cleaning chemicals being left within reach of children. Obviously one of those situations poses much greater risk than the other, and the corrective action should be more severe. These are the kinds of differences among situations that families have a right to understand in order to make informed choices.

Over the last few years the Department of Human Services (DHS) has contracted with an outside entity to perform analysis of which types of violations pose direct and immediate risk of harm to children, as opposed to less serious violations that while still needing correction, do not pose the same level of risk. It has also sought extensive feedback from providers, advocates, families, and more. Now the research is done, the recommendations are ready, and funds are needed to put the new system into practice. Providers are very excited about these changes, and looking forward to the next stage of the Regulation Modernization Project which will involve actual revisions of the standards themselves, which will then be weighted based on risk in this new system.

We are excited to see that in the new proposed system additional violations will be eligible for documented technical assistance. These items identified as posing low risk to children are opportunities for licensors to work with providers to provide education, monitor improvement, and help improve environments for children in supportive ways. MCCA feels that Minnesota's current licensing practices out of DHS are supportive and in the spirit of partnership, and this new system is another tool that will further that work and relationships.

We very much want strong licensing standards, as these are the regulatory floor supporting the health and safety of children in licensed care. We also want standards that are fair and supportive for providers, and transparent and helpful to families looking at such records. It is time to finish the work and get this research-based, stakeholder-engagement intensive weighted risk system of licensing over the finish line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clare I. Sanford".

Clare Sanford
Government Relations Chair
Minnesota Child Care Association