



Testimony Concerning HB 1403
“Family Child Care Homes and Large Family Child Care Homes - Age of
Children in Care - Alterations”
Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee
March 6, 2024

Position: Oppose

Maryland Family Network (MFN) opposes HB 1403, which would alter the required adult-to-young-child ratio in family child care programs. Currently a family child care provider may care for up to eight children, with no more than two under the age of 2. HB 1403 would alter that age limitation to no more than two children under the age of 15 months.

Current regulations require that whenever more than two children younger than age 2 are in care, an additional adult shall be present. The proposed legislation does not put any restrictions on the age of the other six children in the group—raising the prospect that, if the bill were to pass, an entire group of eight children could be under age 2. This raises serious concerns about the health and safety, adequate supervision, and developmentally appropriate care for very young children.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

We recognize the supply of infant child care continues to challenge communities across the State. We maintain it is in the best interest of young children and their families for the State to focus on supply-building strategies that maintain the primacy of infant health and safety. Similar attempts to alter ratios failed in the past primarily because of safety concerns in the event of an emergency. However, meeting the day to day needs of multiple children under two—including feeding, diapering, and the critically important give and take of communication during early language development—requires one-on-one attention and bonding between infant and caregiver.

Let us not risk injury or the loss of an infant to grow child care supply. MFN respectfully urges an unfavorable report on HB 1403.

