



February 3, 2025

Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
Maryland State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Urging Rejection of House Bill 477

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members,

On behalf of New America's Early and Elementary Education Policy program and as concerned Maryland voters, we write in opposition to House Bill 477, which would increase from four to five the number of children under the age of two that are authorized to be cared for by a single adult in a family child care home. New America's [Early and Elementary Education Policy program](#) works to ensure that all children have access to a system of high-quality early learning opportunities from birth through third grade that prepare them to thrive in school and in life.

The ratios that would be allowed if this bill becomes law are out of step with the recommendations of both the federal government and prominent organizations focused on children's health, safety, and development. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care, [recommends](#) that large family child care homes have no more than two children under the age of two for every adult. Additionally, regulations governing family child care homes that participate in the child care system managed by the U.S. Department of Defense [require](#) a maximum of three children when all children are under two years of age. Finally, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Education [recommend](#) a ratio of two children under the age of two for every one adult.

There are valid reasons why these organizations are in agreement on the importance of low ratios when caring for our nation's youngest children. Research [suggests](#) that lower ratios produce a significantly higher quality of caregiver to child interaction than higher ratios, particularly for younger children. There is also reason to believe that children who are cared for in settings with lower ratios receive [more stimulating and responsive care](#). Raising ratios in family child care homes could impede providers' ability to offer each child adequate attention and support, something that is especially important during the crucial first years of a child's development.

Low child-staff ratios are essential not just for maximizing the quality of care received, but also for basic health and safety. Lower ratios have been associated with [fewer situations](#) that threaten the safety of children. Additionally, the [State of Maryland Fire Prevention Code](#), in a section specifically focused on "Family Day-Care Homes," mandates that "A staff-to-client ratio



of at least one staff member to every two clients incapable of self-preservation shall be maintained at all times.” By definition, a child under the age of two is incapable of self-preservation during a fire emergency.

There is no doubt that Maryland parents are facing [a serious lack](#) of accessible, affordable care for infants and toddlers at the same time that providers are struggling financially. However, the best method for addressing these issues is through [expanded funding](#) for the state’s Child Care Scholarship Program rather than increasing ratios and possibly sacrificing the health, safety, and development of the state’s youngest children.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide the committee with further information about this topic or any other related to the state’s child care landscape.

Respectfully submitted,

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