



Why deregulation is not the way to fix child care

“Deregulation” means different things to different people: increasing caregiver ratios, decreasing paperwork, eliminating background checks, or reducing training requirements, to name some. For many, reducing regulations within licensed child care seems like an easy way to reduce costs and build capacity in the child care system.

There are many ways to improve aspects of the child care regulatory system to reduce the burden on child care programs, especially family child care. [The Minnesota Family Child Care Task Force](#), created by legislative action in 2019 and convened throughout the next two years, developed a report with many specific policy recommendations. These included changes to the licensing system to improve the inspection process, developing more substantial resources to help child care programs navigate the licensing process and acquire necessary business skills, and setting up an advisory committee to improve training requirements and design.

However, overly broad attempts to deregulate child care are harmful to children and unlikely to have the desired result. Specifically, increasing the number of children in a family child care home or child care classroom and decreasing the required training for early educators are counterproductive.

Research and national guidance indicate that fewer children per caregiver and smaller group sizes contribute to the health, safety, and development of children, as well as lower stress levels in staff. While hiring fewer early educators and allowing for more children in a child care setting may reduce costs and help alleviate child care shortages in the short term, the costs to children’s positive growth and development may be high. Likewise, training supports the skills that early educators need to do their jobs effectively through topics such as safety, promoting social and emotional development, child development and learning, and professionalism. Minnesota’s training requirements for early childhood educators are similar to or fewer than requirements for other professions.

The real solution to Minnesota’s child care problem is to increase public investment to cover the cost of providing quality care. This must include competitive compensation for the early childhood workforce and affordability for families. Wholesale deregulation is not the answer.