

Oppose HB 153: Child Care Revisions - Protect Kids in Care!

Published: Tuesday, 20 February 2024 13:50

Written by: Jenna Williams



Representative Susan Pulsipher's [HB 153](#) was initially aimed at providing tax relief for families with young children through an [expanded state child tax credit](#). Originally, the bill aimed to extend the child tax credit eligibility from ages one to three to ages one to five. We considered this original bill to be a top Voices for Utah Children priority. Unfortunately, during the session the bill was hijacked and an adopted substitute now adds a damaging provision allowing unlicensed child care providers to look after up to 8 children without safety training or home inspections.

While we appreciate the expanded background check measures and child ratio requirement for children under 3 for unlicensed providers, the bill lacks enforcement provisions for those operating without checks or failing them, as well as for existing unlicensed providers.

Why We Oppose HB 153 S03

This change jeopardizes the safety of Utah children by permitting unlicensed providers, without CPR and First Aid training or home inspections, to care for more children without oversight. This bill does *not* increase capacity for licensed family

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child care providers, rather, it specifically allows unlicensed individuals to watch more children.

Addressing child care licensing standards within a tax code bill is inappropriate. While expanding Utah's Child Tax Credit was a key priority, it does not belong in the same bill that seeks to lower standards for child care quality.

Utah has seen previous attempts to increase the number of children allowed in unlicensed care. In 2021, [HB 271](#) attempted to increase the number of children an unregulated provider could care for from 4 to 6. While it failed, it resurfaced in 2022 under [HB 15](#), passing despite extensive opposition from providers and child safety groups, including Voices for Utah Children. HB 153 S03 takes this effort a step further by increasing the number of children from 6 to 8.

Why HB 153 S03 is Dangerous

This proposal disempowers parents, grandparents, foster parents, and working adults seeking safe child care options for their children. The lack of oversight and transparency in under-the-radar child care puts families in a precarious position, unable to access vital information about providers (e.g. verified background checks, safety violations and complaints, and guaranteed levels of basic safety training). While we appreciate the added provisions requiring background checks for unlicensed providers, the bill lacks enforcement and does not specify whether background check results will be available to the public.

Homeowners insurance doesn't cover providers caring for more than four unrelated children, and providers cannot access outside liability insurance without a license, leaving parents with minimal legal recourse if their child is hurt, injured, or killed while in care.

This change would solidify Utah's place as the second-worst state nationally in this aspect, with only South Dakota allowing higher unregulated care capacity. If Utah is supposed to be a state that is good for kids and families, this bill sets us back.

Why HB 153 S03 Doesn't Help Fix the Child Care Crisis

Many child care experts predict that this change would actually decrease the supply

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of available child care in Utah. This proposal could incentivize some programs to reduce their size and drop their licenses, leaving fewer families with access to any care.

[Many proposals](#) have been made to address Utah's child care crisis, but lowering standards for the people who care for children is not, and should not be, one of them. This is not requested or supported by early care and learning professionals and experts. Parents seek easier access to good, affordable child care with certainty that their children are safe, happy, healthy, and learning. Parents and providers want the state to prioritize the well-being of Utah's children, rather than advancing simplified policy proposals that divert attention from the genuine problem-solving needed to address the child care crisis.

What About Supporting the Child Tax Credit?

Although HB 153 was initially one of our priority pieces of legislation, the recent licensing changes have led us to withdraw our support for this bill. Originally, the bill only made incremental expansions to the child tax credit, but with the adoption of the third substitute, eligibility for 5-year-olds was removed, effectively cutting the expansion in half. Our analysis indicates that HB 153 S03 will only extend the credit to 0.4% more families, which is insufficient. The proposed changes to childcare licensing are concerning and not worth the marginal increase in tax credit eligibility. Voices for Utah Children believes it's preferable to either revert to the original bill or forego its passage entirely. Moving forward, we will focus on advocating for a more comprehensive child tax credit without compromising on childcare safety standards.



[FAQs on HB 153: Child Care Revisions](#)