

Senate Health and Human Services
March 11, 2025

Support for SB599

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Kolkhorst and Members of the Committee. My name is Kim Kofron, I'm the Sr. Director of Education for Children at Risk. We, at Children at Risk, have been tracking Child Care Deserts across our state since 2017. Child Care Deserts are a zip code where there are three times more children than child care seats. We track both the numbers and capacity of child care centers and family child care homes.

As the name suggests, a family child care home is when an individual—most often a woman—provides care in their own home. These small businesses serve working parents with smaller, more personalized child care options right in their neighborhoods. Many providers offer flexible hours, including overnight care, making them essential for wage workers and those with non-traditional schedules.

This type of child care is particularly crucial in rural areas and "child care deserts," where center-based care is often not economically viable. Unfortunately, Texas has lost 18% of its family child care homes since 2019—nearly 900 providers. And the losses continue. If you look at the Legislative District one-pagers which I have provided, every one of your Districts has lost significant numbers of these providers since 2019, in one case up to 41%. Child care centers returned after the pandemic but child care homes have not. As more programs close, parents struggle, businesses suffer, and our economy takes a hit. Employers who rely on home-based child care—especially in rural communities and during non-traditional hours—are facing workforce shortages as parents have nowhere to send their children.

Texas can take action now—without new spending—by addressing local barriers. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission already ensures statewide safety standards, but excessive local zoning and ordinances often prevent home child care providers from opening or operating efficiently. Reducing these regulatory hurdles will allow more providers to serve working families, helping parents, businesses, and the Texas economy thrive.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you to support policies that protect and expand family home child care in Texas. I'm happy to answer any questions.