



Testimony of Jen Segelken

Senior Vice President of Youth Development, YMCA of Greater Philadelphia
On Behalf of the Pennsylvania State Alliance of YMCAs
Before the House Republican Policy Committee
Friday, June 20, 2025

Chairman Rowe and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the critical issue of childcare regulations.

My name is Jen Segelken, and I serve as the Senior Vice President of Youth Development at the YMCA of Greater Philadelphia. Today, I am speaking on behalf of the Pennsylvania State Alliance of YMCAs, which represents more than 300 Ys across the Commonwealth, providing essential services to hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians.

Introduction

Pennsylvania is proud to be home to more YMCAs than any other state in the nation. More than 700,000 Pennsylvanians are members of their local YMCA, and an additional 180,000 individuals participate in YMCA programs every year. The YMCA's impact is profound—whether in rural or urban communities, we provide essential programs and services that improve quality of life, support families, and foster safer communities by offering children and families both a place to go and activities to engage in.

Importantly, the YMCA is also the largest provider of childcare services in Pennsylvania and across the nation.

Challenges in the Childcare Sector

At the heart of our mission is the safety of families and the provision of affordable, high-quality childcare. Unfortunately, the childcare sector in Pennsylvania is currently facing significant challenges—particularly in terms of funding and staffing. These challenges come at a time when the workforce is recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and competing on a global stage.

Currently, YMCAs operate nearly 230 early learning and out-of-school time centers statewide - both at our branches and in local schools. Yet, we are struggling to meet the growing demand. We have waiting lists in many centers, ranging from 20 to over 340 children. While the demand



for childcare continues to climb, barriers such as staffing shortages and rigid and arbitrary regulations prevent us from expanding our services to meet that need.

To help address these challenges, we believe that greater flexibility in the following areas could support expansion and allow us to serve more children and families:

1. **Staffing Qualifications:** We need flexibility around staffing requirements without compromising safety and health standards. The current educational qualifications required for childcare staff can severely limit our applicant pool. The cost of obtaining a degree or certification in early childhood education is simply not economically feasible, especially when taking on that debt—particularly when other industries, like retail, offer better pay. Without developing and accepting a broader pool of qualified candidates, the expansion of childcare services becomes nearly impossible.
2. **Regulatory Reforms:** While many of the current regulations are well-intentioned, they often create unnecessary barriers for licensed childcare providers, particularly those with limited resources. We commend the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning's (OCDEL) efforts in revising the Child Care Certification Regulations and encourage the implementation of feasible changes as soon as possible to help ease the burden on providers. Your package should include a set of recommendations that we submitted to OCDEL and PDE several months ago.

Challenges in Childcare Regulations

Federal and Pennsylvania's childcare regulations are highly complex, and while they are intended to ensure safety and quality, they often create operational inefficiencies. These regulations can increase costs and complicate operations, particularly for small or nonprofit providers.

Some examples of regulations that create unnecessary barriers include:

- **Playground Equipment Requirements:** Discrepancies exist between the requirements for school-based programs and those for afterschool programs, leading to confusion and inefficiencies.
- **Bathroom Supervision and Covered Trash Bins:** There are differing standards for programs during school hours versus afterschool care, which can cause operational inconsistencies.
- **Bus Transportation Discrepancies:** Varying rules for transportation affect how children are moved between locations for afterschool care.
- **Licensing Confusion:** Differentiations between licensed and unlicensed afterschool programs often create confusion, hindering providers from delivering seamless care to children.



Other administrative hurdles include:

- **Wet Signatures:** Requiring wet signatures on every document is both administratively burdensome and time-consuming.
- **Restrictive Staff Educational Requirements:** The current educational requirements for staff limit the talent pool, creating challenges in recruitment.
- **Limited Flexibility in Facility Use:** Restrictions on how licensed spaces can be used during non-program hours inhibit the ability to maximize facility use and efficiency.
- **Fire System Documentation:** For childcare centers located within public schools, providing proof of fire system installations and maintenance can be unnecessarily difficult.

These regulations create not only financial burdens but also operational inefficiencies that ultimately limit our ability to serve families effectively.

Workforce Development and Economic Impact

Childcare is not just a service—it is a cornerstone of our economy. For working parents, access to affordable, dependable childcare is essential for maintaining employment, supporting economic recovery, and ensuring workforce participation.

The Pennsylvania Chamber estimates that the Commonwealth loses more than \$3.5 billion each year due to the inefficiencies and breakdowns in the childcare system. This is a stark reminder of how integral childcare is to Pennsylvania's economic health.

Conclusion

YMCAs remain deeply committed to providing safe, high-quality childcare services to families across the Commonwealth. We are dedicated to working with policymakers like you to find solutions to these challenges and create a more sustainable, efficient childcare system in Pennsylvania.

In conclusion, safety and quality are non-negotiable. However, with thoughtful regulatory reform, greater staffing flexibility and targeted funding we believe we can meet the increasing demand for childcare services while supporting the dedicated professionals who make this work possible.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.