

OpenVoiceNews U.S.

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Parents and Advocates Push Back on State Child Care Rollbacks

July 20, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



[Download IPFS](#)

As federal funding dries up, some U.S. states are proposing to ease child care regulations to manage growing costs. But parents, child welfare experts, and early childhood advocates are mounting a strong opposition, warning that these changes could come at the expense of child safety and care standards.

After the passage of the American Rescue Plan in 2021, many states were able to temporarily support their struggling child care sectors with a boost in federal dollars. But with those funds now depleted, state lawmakers are seeking budget-neutral solutions to the ongoing child care crisis. One approach gaining traction is the rollback of long-standing regulatory safeguards, particularly those involving mandated staff-to-child ratios in early learning settings. At least ten states have introduced legislation to loosen child care regulations, raising concerns from advocates who argue that reduced oversight could endanger children and overburden providers.

Idaho emerged as the focal point of this debate when House Bill 243 (HB243) was introduced. In its original form, the bill proposed the complete elimination of requirements governing the number of children a single early educator could supervise. If passed in its original form, Idaho would have become the first state in the nation to completely remove state-imposed limits on staff-to-child ratios, giving child care providers full discretion. The proposal moved swiftly through the Idaho House, prompting a rapid response from advocacy groups and concerned parents.

Christine Tiddens, executive director of Idaho Voices for Children, a nonprofit organization focused on policies that benefit children, said the bill's speed left little room for preparation. "You can't get child care providers and parents there in that amount of time," she said, referencing the under-24-hour notice for the bill's public hearing. Despite the rushed process, opposition efforts quickly gained traction.

The emotional turning point came when Idaho parent Kelly Emry shared her tragic story. Emry received a frantic call from her son's home-based child care provider in June 2024, informing her that her 11-week-old son, Logan, had died. The coroner ruled the cause of death as positional asphyxiation, citing unsafe sleep conditions. At the time of Logan's death, the provider was caring for 11 children alone, violating Idaho regulations that required at least two caregivers for that number of children. Emry told her story in a podcast interview, calling the tragedy "completely preventable."

Emry's testimony, along with that of her family and other citizens, galvanized a large grassroots movement. The Senate hearing saw hundreds in attendance, with testimony from pediatricians, fire marshals, nurses, law enforcement, and concerned parents. Of the 40 individuals who signed up to speak, 38 opposed the bill. Thousands of calls and emails poured in to lawmakers, many referencing the powerful account of Logan's death.

Although the bill narrowly passed the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, a subsequent effort on the Senate floor succeeded in amending the bill to remove its most extreme elements. The original plan to eliminate all staff-to-child ratios was removed during the amending process. Idaho retained mandatory staff-to-child ratios, though they were made more lenient, resulting in the state's regulatory ranking dropping from 41st to 45th nationally.

Tiddens described the outcome as “bittersweet,” crediting the change not to lobbyists or industry players, but to ordinary parents who spoke out. “How could you listen and not have your heart changed?” she asked, reflecting on the powerful impact of personal stories in legislative decision-making.

As more states weigh similar deregulation measures, Idaho's experience may serve as a warning. While budget constraints are real, critics argue that loosening standards without adequate safeguards risks repeating tragedies that could otherwise be prevented.