



## MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

### S278 (Skoufis)/A612 (Hevesi)

The undersigned businesses and organizations submit this memorandum supporting S278 (Skoufis) / A612 (Hevesi). This bill empowers the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to modernize and standardize staff-to-child ratios across childcare programs, aligning regulations with current operational realities and regional needs. Notably, this legislation would bring Upstate New York's ratio policies in line with those already in effect in New York City, reducing regional disparities and allowing providers outside the five boroughs to operate on a more level playing field.

Access to reliable and affordable childcare remains one of the most pressing barriers to workforce participation in New York. A 2023 report from the New York State Department of Labor identified childcare as a leading factor preventing parents—especially mothers—from maintaining steady employment. While 94% of fathers and 68% of mothers with children under six are in the workforce, licensed childcare capacity currently meets only about half of the estimated statewide demand.

The resulting childcare shortage is not just a family issue—it is a workforce and economic competitiveness issue. Employers across New York report increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, and higher turnover rates due to childcare challenges faced by their employees. These pressures weaken business recruitment and retention at a time when Upstate regions are working aggressively to grow their labor force and attract new industries.

Additionally, operational costs continue to climb. The average annual cost of center-based infant care in New York now exceeds \$14,600, consuming more than 30 percent of the median income in many

counties. At the same time, persistent staffing shortages make it difficult for childcare providers to expand or even maintain operations under current rigid ratio requirements, further constraining supply.

**This bill provides meaningful relief. Under current rules, providers frequently report that when a room's capacity reaches 12 children, they must add a third teacher—effectively creating a 1:2 ratio for the final two openings. Many simply cannot absorb that cost. As a result, they either hire the additional teacher at a premium or they leave those last two slots empty, even when community demand is extremely high. By modernizing ratio authority, OCFS can allow providers to safely meet full room capacity without the financially prohibitive staffing structure that currently discourages expansion. This increases available seats while maintaining program quality.**

By allowing OCFS to set ratios based on contemporary best practices and operational data, this legislation would give providers greater flexibility to serve additional families without compromising safety. It would also harmonize regulatory treatment across the state, eliminating outdated discrepancies that put Upstate providers at a disadvantage compared to those in New York City.

For these outlined reasons, Greater Rochester Chamber and partner organizations listed below supports passage of this legislation.

Signed:

Greater Rochester Chamber  
Buffalo Niagara Partnership  
Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce  
CenterstateCEO  
Capital Region Chamber  
North Country Chamber of Commerce  
Upstate United  
Business Council of Westchester  
The Children's Agenda  
First Learning  
The Business Council of NYS  
RochesterWorks