



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
516 West Loockerman St., Dover, DE 19904
302-739-4553 (voice) 302-739-6126 (fax) <http://www.gacec.delaware.gov>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 2023

TO: **The Honorable Senator David Wilson and Representative Jesse Vanderwende, Sponsors**
The Honorable Senators Hocker, Lawson, Pettyjohn, Richardson and Representatives Briggs King, Collins, Gray, Hilovsky, Postles, D. Short, Shupe, Michael Smith, Yearick, Co-Sponsors

FROM: **Ann C. Fisher, Chairperson**
GACEC

RE: **Senate Bill No. 69 Exempting Childcare in Sectarian from State Regulation**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed Senate Bill No. 69, which seeks to exempt sectarian or religious institutions from the Delaware Child Care Act. This exemption is troubling because it could mean that a large percentage of daycares in Delaware would be exempt from the safety and quality requirements for childcare under Delaware law. Nationwide, approximately half of all working families who use center-based childcare are using a faith-based program. In Delaware specifically, approximately 52% of all daycares are religiously affiliated. In an environment in which daycare is in high demand and parents and employers are in urgent need of affordable child care, families are often limited in their child care options and should be able to expect that a religiously affiliated center is still meeting safety and quality standards. Parents should be secure in knowing that no matter where they place their child in childcare, that childcare will be held to basic state standards designed to keep children safe and healthy.

Current Delaware regulations already make exemption for short-term childcare provided by religious organizations, or other programming for children sometimes provided by religious organizations, such as religious instruction, school vacation programming, tutoring, or music, sports, or arts instruction. The proposed exemptions in this bill far exceed the scope of these types of shorter term or more informal programs, and would instead exempt typical childcare programming run by religious organizations filling a similar need, and requiring the same safety and quality standards, as sectarian childcare centers. Council **does not support** this proposed bill, as it could increase health and safety issues and could lead to more incidents of abuse and neglect, all of which can lead to injuries and potential disabilities. Children and parents deserve to have childcare that is provided according to appropriate health and safety regulations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concern with the proposed legislation. Please feel free to contact me or Pam Weir at the GACEC office in order to discuss the implications and perhaps unintended consequences of this proposed legislation. We look forward to hearing from you.