

CHILD CARE CRISIS

Why is it so **expensive** and **hard to find**?

29% FEWER licensed family child care providers since 2018

10TH-WORST STATE in US for child care regulation

Finding child care in Maine has become **nearly impossible** for many families. Since 2011, every county in Maine has lost at least 40% of its small, family child care providers. The loss hits **rural communities hardest**. More than 3,600 children are on waiting lists statewide; nearly 80% are infants. In many parts of Maine, there simply are no open spots.

The cost is **crushing** for the families who do find care. Full-time infant care in southern Maine runs more than \$17,000 a year, but child care providers aren't getting rich. Augusta's **overregulation** makes it nearly impossible for small, home-based daycares to serve their neighbors without drowning in red tape.

For example: Maine has some of the **strictest staff-to-child ratios in the country**, driving up costs without improving outcomes for kids. On top of that, every provider and staff member must log ongoing training hours in a state-run professional development system – an added layer of compliance that most states simply do not impose.

It all adds up: a West Virginia University study ranked Maine **41st in the nation for child care regulatory freedom**. Onerous rules raise costs, pricing providers out of the market and leaving Maine families with fewer options every year.

The Bottom Line:

WE CAN'T AFFORD THIS

Maine's child care crisis isn't solely about costs. It's because of low supply, and Augusta's overregulation is the reason providers keep leaving the market.

The Solution:

1. Reduce staff-to-child ratio requirements to national norms.
2. Raise licensing thresholds and simplify rules for home-based providers.
3. Reduce or eliminate provider staff training and credentialing mandates.