



ARCO IRIS

BILINGUAL CHILDREN'S CENTER

March 2, 2022

Testimony Concerning Support for:

HB 1100 – Child Care Providers and Employees – Bonuses

Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means

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We urge your support for legislation to help ensure a thriving child care system in Maryland.

As a Director and owner of Arco Iris Bilingual Children's Center, I support HB1100. The childcare community is more than thankful to know that the Senators and delegates from our dear Maryland have put so much interest in our advocacy efforts and testimonies from the everyday struggles we encounter particularly during this Pandemic. Since the pandemic started, I have faced a period like no other. I have fought through what feels like endless struggles as I try to remain viable. To comply with mandates from our governor, I shut down my center on March 13, 2020. For five months we remained closed as

numbers spiked. By the time I was able to reopen in August of 2020, I had lost 60% of my teachers and our enrollment was down by 75%. This past year 2021, I had to relocate my business and start again.

I attempted to recruit staff to be part of my program, but most of it was in vain. Staffing shortages were a big problem for many child care centers, including my own, before the pandemic, but the pandemic only worsened and deepened this problem.

HB1100 will provide a great opportunity to help us cover hiring expenses and hiring bonuses to attract people to our field.

Many of us, mostly women, devote many hours of our lives to care for and prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to thrive. Unfortunately, this beautiful career is not respected as it should be. Our society divides early childhood education in two. It seems that the “real” education starts in Kindergarten, but the truth is that we can start as early as birth.

As a childcare director and a passionate advocate for my field I believe strongly in the concept of purpose and partnership. Public school system, private childcare centers, family childcare providers, families, and government must unify to make early childhood education a priority for America’s children.

That is why, I am in favor of this Bill which brings much economic recognition to our teachers in this amazing field.

Sincerely,

R. Carolina Reyes