

February 15, 2022

**Testimony Concerning HB 513: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
Consultation Program - Established**

Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means

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Prince George's Child Resource Center (PGCRC) envisions vibrant, healthy communities where individuals and families care, support and advocate for each other and invest in creating opportunities for children to develop strong, successful life paths. The Resource Center has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they seek child care where their children can thrive.

We urge the Committee to support HB 513 and establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development.

This is undoubtedly the best time to make this investment to promote positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children. We must make sure referrals are possible, and we must make sure services are available for those who seek them. 72% of Prince George's County child care providers are seeking training to provide children with social emotional supports.

Project WIN, PGCRC's early childhood mental health program, helps child care providers and families identify and treat mental health issues and social-emotional challenges for young children ages two- to five-years old. We primarily work with programs that serve children with disabilities, children from low-income households, and English Language Learners. The need for special-needs child care and intervention is substantial, with children who have emotional and social disorders comprising a large segment of the population in need of our services. Currently, 79% of the children referred to Project WIN are male and 69% are African American.

We receive many more requests than we are able to serve. Currently, we have two full time staff serving Prince George's County, but that is not nearly enough to cover 800 programs, many of whom are reporting that the Pandemic has impacted young children's mental health. The stress of the past two years is not lost on these young, receptive brains; they perceive what is happening in their families, and it sometimes results in behavior that can be addressed with enough resources. Minimizing negative impact today has a positive, long-term impact on the future.

