

**Good Morning,**

**My name is Evelyn Owens Williams. As an early childhood educator at Downtown Baltimore Child Care for over 35 years, I've taught and cared for hundreds of children. Downtown Baltimore Child Care is known throughout the region as an example of what's possible in a high-quality child care environment. We are the place that "gets it right" for children, families, and teachers. All of our centers are accredited, and have achieved the highest possible quality ratings from MSDE. DBCC currently employs three master's level pre-k teachers, myself included. Yet, our centers are not currently eligible for the pre-k expansion grants because of the teacher certification requirement.**

**As someone who has devoted my life to early childhood education in the private sector, I have never pursued an MSDE teaching license, but I have demonstrated my ability to foster growth in children. To get certified at this stage in my career would require me to complete an approved MSDE program that requires field experience or "student teaching". In other words, to become certified to do the job I have**

**already been excelling at for decades, I would need to leave my job. This requirement is inequitable, unnecessary, and places an undue burden on quality early childhood educators and programs.**

**The opportunity for mixed-delivery is technically here, but the gates are still closed and keeping out experienced and talented teachers. DBCC is in favor of HB 1441 because it recognizes qualified child care providers and expands Maryland's ability to serve children and families.**