

January 24, 2024

**Support for PG 504-24, 505-24
Submitted to the Prince George's County House Delegation**

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Child Resource Connect (CRC), formerly Prince George's Child Resource Center, has been providing services to Prince George's County since 1990. CRC helps create healthy and nurturing environments for children by supporting their families and educating their caregivers. Through a comprehensive array of programming—direct services for children and families, education and coaching for child care providers, and grassroots advocacy in partnership with stakeholders at all levels—we work towards communities in which all families have access to high-quality child care and the resources and support they need to build stable, secure environments in which children can thrive.

PG 504-24

Prince George's County has seen a rise in teen parents even as resources for teen parents have dried up. At a recent community meeting, a leader of the Adolescent Single Parent Program for Prince George's County Public Schools shared that there are more than 100 teen parents in the County Schools "that we know of." That last phrase is indicative the lack of resources available to help teen parents stay in school. How many do we not know about?

Providing in-school child care is critical for young parents to meet the unanimous goal of high school completion, which will give their children the best chance at a stable, thriving future. This also allows for case management for these young moms and dads, which would allow easy access to other supports such as Healthy Families Home Visiting services (also offered by Child Resource Connect).

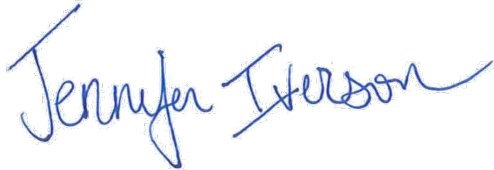
PG 505-24

As the child care resource center for Prince George's County, we have seen first-hand the impact that the Pandemic had on child care and families seeking child care. The slim margin that existed pre-Covid disappeared; programs could simply not afford to pay staff and many never recovered. Today, families cannot find child care because there has been a precipitous decline in the number of child care slots available. Family Child Care has been particularly hard hit; In 2018 there were 800 registered family child care homes, dipping to 588 in 2022. The projection by Maryland Family Network's 2023 Child Care Demographics is that, without intervention, there will be only 368 family child care homes by 2027. **Lack of available child care impacts children's safety, children's school readiness, parent's ability to go to work, and our overall economy.**

The situation is even more stark within low-income communities, where many potential providers themselves do not have the resources to start up a family child care business that could serve their community. Therefore, Child Resource Connects (CRC) enthusiastically supports PG 505-25. CRC is already providing these supports to help new family child care small businesses; but dedicated resources for low-income pockets of the County is much needed. Combined with the child care scholarship, this bill would address both wage compensation for the child care providers, and the needs of children and families.

Unfortunately, the child care workforce does not have the luxury of time. They are struggling with critical workforce shortages. Bonuses and support are important for family child care right now to incentivize, recruit, retain and train new people to do this crucial work. This crucial legislation also has long-term impact on successful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Parents are counting on it. Early childhood educators are counting on it. We need every penny to invest, support and incentivize this essential field.

We urge your support for legislation. Thank you for your leadership for our community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Iverson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.