



**Testimony Concerning HB 1426**  
**“Education - Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Alterations”**  
**Submitted to the House Ways & Means and Appropriations Committees**  
**February 26, 2024**

**Position: Support**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports HB 1426, which would make alterations to certain provisions of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

Family Support Centers (Patty Centers) are community-based programs that provide free services to parents with young children birth through age 3 to help them raise healthy children and build productive futures. Located in Maryland neighborhoods with high numbers of pregnant and parenting adolescents, families living at or near poverty, low birth-weight babies, parents who have not completed high school and/or high school students working towards obtaining a high school diploma, non-English speakers, and under-employed and unemployed adults, the Centers provide comprehensive, preventive services to pregnant women and young families with children under age 4, together. MFN administers Maryland’s network of Family Support Centers.

The Blueprint calls for the creation of thirty new Family Support Centers over ten years. HB 1426 clarifies that Family Support Center funds may be used for planning and development in the first year of a grant. Time for deliberate planning allows MFN to ensure programs hit the ground running and are more likely to succeed when they launch.

HB 1426 also adds certain early childhood educators to the pool of professionals eligible for the Nancy Grasmick School Professional Award. This is one of many ways the State continues to demonstrate its commitment to the professional development of early care and education professionals.

MFN respectfully urges favorable consideration of HB 1426.

