



House Bill 1139

Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Permanent Establishment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means and
Appropriations Committees

Date: February 21, 2024

From: Brianna January and Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1139. This bill would make the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program into a permanent program to support Marylanders interested in starting private child care services. It comes at a time when child care, and early childhood education, are undergoing a transformation with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the shortage of licensed child care providers to support the safe care of Maryland's children and support the state's working families. Maryland does not currently have enough licensed providers to meet the needs of such families balancing work and child care. Furthermore, as the State expands universal pre-kindergarten under the Blueprint with the incorporation of private providers into public early childhood education, communities are concerned there won't be sufficient child care services for infants to three-year-olds.

HB 1139 helps address these issues. The bill would convert the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program (GOFCC) into a permanent program to provide technical assistance, mentorship, and professional development to Maryland residents interested in starting their own child care services. The GOFCC program was established in Montgomery County and has expanded to more than half of the state's counties: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's, Washington, and, Wicomico. The expansion of the program to every geographical region is a testament to its success and community buy-in.

While counties have creatively addressed the needs for reliable and safe child care, they welcome new and innovative approaches to stabilizing the industry, like GOFCC. Consistent and safe child care is critical for economic development, successful families and communities, and the development of children. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 1139 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.