

****Testimony in Support of House Bill 524 – State Board of Education
Membership – Early Childhood Development Professional****

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee

My name is Tiffany Jones and I am a family childcare educator and owner of Precious Moments Family Childcare – a NAFCC Accredited high quality child care program offering state funded Pre-K located in Rockville, Maryland. I am also the Maryland State Rep & Policy Fellow for the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) and President of the Family Child Care Association of Montgomery County (FCCAMC). I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 524, which would add an early childhood development professional to the Maryland State Board of Education. As someone who works closely with children in their formative years, I believe it is absolutely essential to have an early childhood development professional represented on the Maryland State Board of Education. Our voices, as those who are directly involved in shaping the early learning experiences of children, must be included in discussions that impact education policy across the state.

Early childhood is a critical period in a child's development, and the decisions made by the Maryland State Board of Education affect our youngest learners. However, without the authentic input of those who are working directly in early childhood education and child care settings, we risk creating policies that do not fully reflect the needs and realities of the children and families we serve. By including an early childhood development professional with extensive experience in child care operations and early childhood curriculum, we are ensuring that the Board has a comprehensive perspective on the full spectrum of education, from birth to K-12.

As a provider, I can tell you that early childhood educators face unique challenges that are not always understood by those who have not worked in the field. These challenges include inadequate funding, staffing shortages, and the difficulty of meeting the diverse needs of children in a way that fosters their cognitive, emotional, and social development. When we make decisions about educational policies, it is crucial that we have someone who understands these challenges firsthand, someone who can advocate for the importance of high-quality early childhood care and education.

House Bill 524 is an important step toward ensuring that early childhood professionals are represented where critical decisions about education are being made. The addition of this member to the Maryland State Board of Education will bring valuable expertise, particularly in the areas of child development, curriculum design, and the operational realities of running child care businesses. This perspective is essential for crafting policies that are not only effective but also practical and sustainable for early childhood providers.

I strongly urge you to support House Bill 524. It is a vital piece of legislation that will ensure early childhood development professionals have a seat at the table, allowing us to advocate for policies that support children, families, and educators alike. By making this change, we are taking a significant step toward strengthening Maryland's education system from the very beginning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Jones

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Board Member, Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA)

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