



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 524: State Board of Education - Membership - Early
Childhood Development Professional**

Health and Government Operations Committee

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Good Afternoon Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. I am Delegate Pam Guzzone, representing Howard County's District 13 and I am here in support of House Bill 524, which adds an early childhood development professional, specifically with experience in the operations of a child care business, to the State Board of Education.

I come to this issue with a background knowledge of the business operations of a child development center.

As some of you may know, I worked at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center for over 30 years. Goddard has had an on-site child development center for over 50 years. All 3 of my children attended that center from aged 3 thru kindergarten - public school kindergarten was not full day when my kids were little.

During the years my kids were there, the center was run under a co-op like model, so a parent-led board oversaw the executive director, approved the annual budget and approved policy decisions. I served on that board for a number of years.

Years later, the Office of the Center Director at Goddard assumed management of the child development center. In my final position at Goddard, the child development center was part of my portfolio and its executive director reported to me. While the child development center did (and does) get some support from Goddard, it is essentially self-funded meaning the teachers and staff are employees of the Child Development Center and not civil servants. Like virtually all child development providers, its tuition was driven heavily by teacher and staff salaries and benefits and enrollment numbers.

I share all this to show that I have very hands-on knowledge of the business challenges of providing quality child care.

This also means that I know first-hand the value of accessible, affordable, quality child care. And I know just how hard it is to balance those 3 elements - accessibility, affordability and quality - a balance that is a constant challenge across the industry whether we are talking about a small, family-based provider or a large child development center.

Page 2
Delegate Pam Guzzone
HB 524 Testimony

I think we all know that leadership begins at the top. Per the Board's authority, it sets educational policy and standards for pre-kindergarten through high school...passes regulations that have the force of law and is empowered to interpret the true meaning and intent of the law. To meet the Board's responsibilities around our age 0-5 population – which of course includes PreK-3 and PreK-4 children – a representative voice for the unique aspects of caring for and educating that cohort must be represented at the top, and that means a representative on the State Board of Education.

Maryland has made historic commitments to improving education including for our youngest learners. This bill is necessary to ensure that early childhood is appropriately prioritized to meet those goals and help ensure the future success of our public school system as well as the State as a whole. For these reasons and more, I respectfully request a positive report on HB 524.