



**Testimony Concerning SB 359**  
**“Child Care Facilities - Criminal History Records Check - Requirement”**  
**Submitted to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**February 18, 2026**

**Position: Support**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 359, which would require the State Department of Education to establish a centralized unit for the processing and management of criminal history records checks, along with abuse and neglect clearances, for child care providers.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and other supports for children and their families. We have been active in state and federal debates on policies that address the needs of working families and are strongly committed to ensuring that they have the supports they need to care for their children while meeting the demands of their jobs.

Currently, the Maryland State Department of Education’s Office of Child Care (OCC) regional licensing staff review and process in-state and out-of-state criminal background clearances and child abuse and neglect records for child care providers. The submission and review of these records is a critical component of measures designed to safeguard children’s safety in child care programs. SB 359 proposes a change of procedure that would necessitate a reallocation of staff resources.

MFN cautions that any shortage of licensing staff could impede the State’s ability to keep current on inspections of regulated child care facilities. Licensing specialists provide essential functions such as supporting compliance with regulations, conducting onsite inspections, and investigating complaints. According to the October 2025 Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability evaluation of the Division of Early Childhood, licensing specialists monitor between 54 and 76 providers, on average. Licensing staff caseloads can affect licensing activities.

Centralizing background check review may increase efficiencies, given that the current background check process requires multiple steps and specialized knowledge. MFN supports efforts to ensure child safety and effectively deliver on a system that is so crucial to child safety. We request a favorable report on SB 359.

Submitted by Beth Morrow, Director of Public Policy