

Testimony in Support of House Bill 635

Submitted by:

Jennifer Parrott, Program Director, Cradlerock Children's Center

My name is Jennifer Parrott, and I am the Program Director at Cradlerock Children's Center, a non-profit child care program located in Columbia, Maryland. I have worked in the field of early childhood education for more than 33 years—as a preschool teacher, assistant director, and director. I am writing today in strong support of House Bill 635.

This legislation addresses one of the most significant challenges facing child care providers: the need for a more efficient, consistent, and reliable system for conducting criminal history checks for child care workers.

At present, when qualified educators move between centers—even within the same county—they are often required to complete new fingerprinting and background checks. This process is costly, time-consuming, and creates unnecessary delays in hiring. These delays directly affect our ability to maintain required staffing levels and meet mandated child-to-teacher ratios, ultimately impacting the quality and continuity of care for children and families.

Equally concerning is the lack of a centralized, statewide database. Without a uniform system, there is a greater risk that critical information could be missed, allowing individuals who should not be working with young children to slip through the cracks. Our children are our most vulnerable population, and they deserve the strongest protections we can provide.

House Bill 635 would establish a standardized, statewide criminal background check system—one that is efficient, transparent, and cost-effective. A centralized database would streamline the hiring process, reduce administrative burden, and ensure that all child care programs across Maryland have access to accurate and up-to-date information. Most importantly, it would strengthen safeguards for the children and families we serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 635 to help protect Maryland's children and support the dedicated early childhood professionals who care for them.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Parrott

Program Director, Cradlerock Children's Center