

**SB 359\_FAV\_MFN\_Morrow.pdf**

Uploaded by: Beth Morrow

Position: FAV



**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

# **SB0359 Child Care Facilities - Criminal History Re**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0359 – Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check – Requirement – FAVORABLE**

Bill Sponsor: Senator Henson

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0359 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to promote legislation that strengthens education, healthcare, public safety, environmental protection, and social justice—ensuring that every Marylander has access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

SB0359 directly advances that mission by improving safety, transparency, and accountability in Maryland’s child care system.

This bill requires individuals who will have direct contact with children in licensed child care facilities to undergo a criminal history records check. It also directs the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish a centralized unit to process and manage these background checks, ensuring consistency, efficiency, and timely review. Additionally, the bill updates the qualifications for probationary employment for first-time child care teachers at centers serving children ages 2 and older.

These provisions are both practical and urgently needed.

Maryland families depend on child care providers to offer safe, nurturing environments for infants, toddlers, and young children. Ensuring that all individuals working directly with children have completed a criminal history records check is a foundational safeguard—one that protects children, supports parents, and strengthens public trust in the child care system.

By centralizing background-check processing within MSDE, SB0359 reduces administrative delays, improves accuracy, and ensures child care facilities receive timely, reliable information. This is especially important for providers already facing staffing shortages and operational pressures. A streamlined, consistent process benefits both families and the workforce.

The bill also modernizes probationary employment rules to reflect the realities of today's child care environment while maintaining strong protections for children. These updates help child care centers recruit and retain qualified staff without compromising safety.

SB0359 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens public safety, supports working families, and promotes equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. By ensuring that all individuals working with children meet clear, consistent safety standards, this legislation reinforces Maryland's commitment to protecting its youngest residents.

We urge the Committee to support this thoughtful, necessary, and community-centered legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0359.**

# **SB 359 Henson EEE Criminal History checks final Fe**

Uploaded by: Christina Peusch

Position: FAV



**Caring For Maryland's Most  
Important Natural Resource™**

# Maryland State Child Care Association

2810 Carrollton Road  
Annapolis, Md. 21403  
Phone: (410) 820-9196  
Email: [info@mscca.org](mailto:info@mscca.org)  
[www.mscca.org](http://www.mscca.org)

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*The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over five thousand members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.*

## **Support Testimony Senate Bill 359 – Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check Requirement Submitted to: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Date: February 18, 2026**

Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland State Child Care Association strongly supports SB 359. This bill strengthens protections for children in Maryland's child care facilities by ensuring that all individuals with direct contact with children are subject to thorough criminal history records checks. The bill also complies with the recommendations based on the independent audit of MSDE licensing procedures captured in the recent OPEGA report. [Evaluation of the Division of Early Childhood](#)  
Our child care workforce is dedicated and professional, but the safety of children must always be the highest priority. SB 359 achieves this goal while creating a clear and consistent process while improving efficiency and effectiveness for compliance:

### **Key Provisions We Support:**

#### **1. Mandatory Criminal History Checks**

- Individuals who will have direct contact with children in child care facilities must undergo criminal history records checks before employment, ensuring that children are protected from potential harm.

#### **2. Centralized Management Unit**

- The State Department of Education will establish a centralized unit to process and manage criminal history check information. This reduces administrative burdens for child care providers and ensures consistent, efficient handling of sensitive records. The centralization will expedite hiring and improve delays associated with onboarding staff.

#### **3. Probationary Employment Qualifications Adjusted**

- First-time child care teachers in certain centers will have clarified probationary employment requirements, balancing the need for safety with practical workforce considerations.

#### **4. Flexibility in Oversight**

- The bill removes outdated limits on the number of Deputy State Superintendents the State Superintendent can appoint, allowing for more effective supervision and oversight of the child care system.

### **Why This Matters**

Maryland's families deserve the assurance that child care providers meet the highest safety standards. SB 359 not only protects children but also supports providers by streamlining procedures and clarifying qualifications for staff. By centralizing criminal history management, the bill helps providers focus on quality care and early learning, rather than administrative compliance challenges.

We urge a favorable report on SB 359 to ensure Maryland's child care system is safe, professional, and well-supported.

# **SEIU Local 500 - Testimony in Support of SB359 202**

Uploaded by: Elly Colmers

Position: FAV



Testimony - SB 359, Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check –  
Requirement  
Favorable

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

February 18, 2026

Elly Cowan on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chair Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 359. This legislation takes important steps to streamline and improve the criminal background check process for child care providers and employees in Maryland.

SEIU Local 500 represents early childhood educators and child care professionals. Our members are deeply committed to maintaining safe, high-quality environments for Maryland’s children. Strong background check standards are a critical component of child safety. At the same time, the current system can be slow, duplicative, and burdensome—creating delays that worsen staffing shortages and disrupt child care operations.

SB359 represents a balanced approach that preserves rigorous safety protections while improving efficiency in the background check process.

Across Maryland, child care providers report that delays in criminal background clearances can postpone hiring for weeks or even months. These delays can prevent qualified candidates from starting employment in a timely manner, increase staffing shortages in licensed programs, limit enrollment capacity for families in need of care, and create administrative burdens for small child care businesses.

When hiring is delayed, classrooms may operate below capacity, waitlists grow longer, and working parents struggle to secure reliable care. SB359 will help streamline the background check process by reducing unnecessary administrative barriers and improving coordination within the system. A more efficient process ensures that

qualified individuals can enter the workforce more quickly while maintaining the essential safeguards that protect children.

For early childhood educators—many of whom work in small centers or family child care homes—predictability and timeliness in the clearance process are essential. Providers operate on thin margins and cannot afford prolonged vacancies. Streamlining the process supports workforce stability, reduces turnover caused by onboarding delays, and strengthens Maryland’s overall child care infrastructure.

Importantly, SEIU Local 500 supports reforms that enhance efficiency without compromising safety. Children’s well-being must remain paramount. SB359 advances both safety and operational effectiveness by modernizing procedures that currently slow down hiring without improving outcomes.

At a time when Maryland continues to face child care workforce shortages, policies that responsibly reduce barriers to employment are critical. HB 635 is a practical solution that benefits providers, employees, and families alike.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 359.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Uploaded by: Jennifer Parrott

Position: FAV

## **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

# **Testimony in support of SB0359 - Child Care Facili**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0359\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
02/18/2026  
Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0359 – FAVORABLE**

**Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check – Requirement**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0359, Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check – Requirement**

Criminal acts in Maryland childcare facilities, including physical/sexual abuse, neglect, and endangerment, result in immediate enforcement actions, such as license suspension, revocation, or criminal prosecution. Recent cases involved staff arrested for assaulting children, with charges including felony child abuse and misdemeanor assault.<sup>1</sup>

**Recent Incidents and Consequences**

- **Documented Abuse:** A daycare worker in Oxen Hill was charged with child abuse and assault after recording themselves harming children.
- **Felony Charges:** A Worcester County employee was indicted on 90 violations, including felony child abuse, after video showed injuries to an infant and other children.
- **Systemic Failures:** Reports have highlighted issues with unlicensed facilities, requiring urgent interventions, such as emergency suspensions, to protect children.

This bill will add restrictions and background checks for anyone employed in child care to ensure Maryland's children are better protected from criminals who prey on these children.

This bill will accomplish that goal by requiring individuals who will have direct contact with children in certain child care facilities to submit to a criminal history records check; requiring the State Department of Education to establish a centralized unit for the processing and management of information about criminal history records checks; altering the applicability of probationary employment qualifications for first-time child care teachers in child care centers in the State that serve children who are at least 2 years old; etc.

One individual committing crimes against a child is one too many and this bill will assist Maryland in protecting our children and preventing employment of individuals who might commit crimes against them.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass SB0359.**

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<sup>1</sup> Google AI Search "criminal acts in child care facilities in Maryland"

**SB0359sponsor testimonyFeb18.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Shaneka Henson

Position: FAV

SHANEKA HENSON  
Legislative District 30  
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 203  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3578  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578  
Shaneka.Henson@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 359**

**Childcare Facilities– Criminal History Records Check-Requirement**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and EEE Committee Members

For the record, I am Shaneka Henson, representing District 30 in Anne Arundel County and member of the JPR Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present SB 359 Childcare Facilities – Criminal History Records Check today.

This legislation is being requested by the Maryland Department of Education with the primary goal to put in place additional protections regarding interactions with young children. Specifically, it requires that an individual who will have direct contact with children in Maryland’s licensed childcare facilities, to submit to a criminal history records check, at the time of their application for employment.

Enacting this legislation requires Maryland’s Department of Education to establish on or before June 30, 2027, a centralized unit to process and manage information about criminal history records. The bill also alters the applicability of probationary employment qualifications for “first-time” teachers in childcare centers having direct contact with the children.

Participating today providing more details are

- Dr. Joshua Michael, President of the Maryland State Board of Education, and
- Tara Phillips, Executive Director of MSDE’s Childcare Operations

After hearing the testimony today, I urge a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you

Shaneka Henson, Senator

**SB0359\_DHS\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Hayes

Position: FWA



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

*Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary*

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0359 - CHILD CARE FACILITIES - CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK - REQUIREMENT - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report with amendments for Senate Bill (SB) 359.

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration implements the Out-of-Home Care program which is affected by SB 359. The bill mandates that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) establish a centralized unit to process and manage criminal history records checks for applicants seeking positions with direct contact with children in child care facilities. We are supportive of all efforts to ensure that adults who supervise children are vetted properly, but we believe that some of the facilities licensed by DHS were included erroneously. In partnership with MSDE, we are offering amendments to strike references to DHS-licensed facilities.

As drafted, SB 359 defines a child care facility as a "child care facility as licensed under [§5-551 of the Family Law Article](#)," which is inclusive of various types of placements licensed by DHS. We currently process our own background checks for out of home care, kinship care, and residential child care institutions in accordance with Family Law §5-551, COMAR regulations (e.g., 07.02.25, 14.31.06), and federal requirements. If we were

to lose direct control over background checks, it would violate the statutory authority for us to vet our own licensees. This creates a conflict with FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) security policies regarding the dissemination of Criminal History Record Information (CHRI), which generally restrict the sharing of unredacted federal criminal records between agencies. If MSDE receives the background check results, federal policy may prohibit them from sharing that data with DHS, effectively blinding DHS to the criminal history of its own resource parents and child care providers. This directly jeopardizes the State's Title IV-E plan, as the Social Security Act requires the state child welfare agency (DHS) to certify safety compliances to receive federal reimbursement for out of home care maintenance payments. If DHS cannot directly access and review these fingerprint results, the Department may lose significant federal Title IV-E funding. After discussion with MSDE, we believe the inclusion of DHS-licensed facilities may have been a drafting error.

DHS supports this bill with amendments to strike DHS-licensed child care facilities. If the bill retains DHS-licensed facilities, it would negatively impact youth in DHS care and custody and DHS' ability to meet their unique needs, potentially delaying placement and contributing to prolonged stays in temporary emergency or congregate care settings. DHS prioritizes safety of children in care and supports the removal of bureaucratic hurdles that slow down the hiring of child care workers. DHS appreciates ongoing collaboration with MSDE and with legislative partners in order to make the bill workable for DHS-licensed providers to best serve the children in our care.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer favorable testimony with amendments to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at [justin.hayes1@maryland.gov](mailto:justin.hayes1@maryland.gov).

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López  
Secretary

**Proposed DHS Amendments to SB 359:**

**Amendment 1:**

P.2, lines 27-28, alter the definition of a child care facility to read as: **“A CHILD CARE CENTER, FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME, OR LARGE FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME THAT IS LICENSED, REGISTERED, OR HOLDS A LETTER OF COMPLIANCE UNDER THIS SUBTITLE”**.

## **MSDE - FWA**

Uploaded by: Laurel Cratsley

Position: FWA

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**TO:** Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

**BILL:** SB 359 - Child Care Facilities - Criminal History Records Check - Requirement

**DATE:** February 18, 2026

**POSITION:** Support with Amendments

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The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing this letter of support for SB 359 - Child Care Facilities - Criminal History Records Check - Requirement. This legislation proposes three important changes to strengthen Maryland's early childhood education system: (1) Repealing the limitation on the number of Deputy State Superintendents of Schools that the State Superintendent may appoint; (2) Establishing a centralized unit within the Department for processing and managing criminal history records checks; and (3) Altering the applicability of probationary employment qualifications for first-time center-based child care teachers to include preschool children who are at least two-years-old, rather than the current standard of three- years-old.

### **Elevating Early Childhood Leadership**

Removing the cap on Deputy State Superintendent appointments allows MSDE to establish a deputy-level position that reports directly to the State Superintendent and is dedicated to early childhood education (ECE), elevating it not only within MSDE but across Maryland and its broader interest holder ecosystem. Reflecting a national trend to prioritize birth-to-age-eight ECE, this structure ensures that ECE perspectives are fully integrated into agency decision-making, shaping policy, funding, and strategic priorities. This leadership role is critical for aligning systems, strengthening cross-agency partnerships, and signaling that early childhood education is foundational to Maryland's educational and economic future. This change is budget-neutral and can be done within MSDE's current resources.

### **Centralized Criminal Background Unit (CCBU)**

Child care centers experience high rates of staff turnover, and each staff person must undergo fingerprinting and background checks for their current employer. The MSDE Child Care Licensing Branch processes approximately 78,000 background checks annually, managed by licensing specialists on regional teams who currently balance these tasks with other critical responsibilities. Each specialist oversees an average of 70-80 cases, including child care centers, family child care homes, large family child care homes, and letter of compliance facilities. While the number of employees varies by type of setting and location, child care centers have an average of 10 employees per center, all of whom are subject to background check requirements. Processing background checks requires checking multiple data systems and accounts for a disproportionate amount of specialists' time, in addition to specialists' other licensing responsibilities that help ensure the health and safety of children in child care.

Establishing a Centralized Criminal Background Unit (CCBU) that allows licensing specialists to specialize in managing background checks has the following potential benefits:

- Increases efficiency by streamlining processing and reducing turnaround times, as centralization allows for

specialized staff and optimized workflows.

- Reduces administrative burden, allowing licensing specialists to focus on core duties.
- Improves accuracy and compliance, ensuring uniform application of regulatory requirements across regions, thus reducing errors and improving audit readiness.
- Generates cost savings by consolidating tasks and minimizing inefficiencies.
- Strengthens child safety as specialized staff ensure thorough and timely checks and improved tracking of renewals and out-of-state verifications.

### **Expanding Probationary Teacher Eligibility**

The legislation also addresses workforce challenges by allowing probationary employment for teachers serving preschool children as young as two-years-old. Currently, probationary status applies only to classrooms with children aged three and older. This change will:

- Broaden the hiring pool, expanding access to qualified candidates.
- Align staffing with classroom demand for younger children, enabling child care centers to fill positions more quickly.
- Create accessible pathways for new hires, improving retention and continuity of care.
- Support program growth and meet family needs, ensuring equitable and consistent staffing policies across all age groups.

Implementation of the probationary teacher component will primarily involve updating the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) for Child Care Centers (13A.16) and Large Family Child Care Homes (13A.18) to reflect the new age threshold.

### **Proposed Amendments**

In partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and bill sponsors, MSDE would like to offer a clarifying amendment that the centralized unit for processing criminal history record checks applies to child care facilities licensed under MSDE, ensuring the bill's intent is aligned with early childhood programs without inadvertently including DHS-licensed foster care homes.

P.2, lines 27-28, alter the definition of a child care facility to read as: "‘CHILD CARE FACILITY’ MEANS A CHILD CARE CENTER, FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME, OR LARGE FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME THAT IS LICENSED, REGISTERED, OR HOLDS A LETTER OF COMPLIANCE UNDER THIS SUBTITLE".

Additionally, MSDE proposes specifying a longer implementation timeline for the centralized unit provision to allow sufficient time to complete the reorganization and ensure a thoughtful, stable, and budget-neutral rollout.

The State Board and MSDE request that the Committee consider this support as it deliberates **SB 359**. Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at [Laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov](mailto:Laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov).

# **SB359 childcare background checks .pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Miicke

Position: FWA



**OFFICERS**

ROBIN WEIMAN  
President

RICHARD GRATZ

SARAH GROSSMAN

AMALIA HONICK

RABBI STEVEN SCHWARTZ

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**MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

- Adat Chaim Congregation
- American Jewish Committee
- Americans for Peace Now  
Baltimore Chapter
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee
- American Red Magen David for Israel
- American Zionist Movement
- Amit Women
- Association of Reform Zionists of America
- Baltimore Board of Rabbis
- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
- Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance
- Baltimore Men's ORT
- Baltimore Zionist District
- Beth Am Congregation
- Beth El Congregation
- Beth Israel Congregation
- Beth Shalom Congregation of  
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- Beth Tfiloh Congregation
- Bnai Brith, Chesapeake Bay Region
- Bnai Israel Congregation
- Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation
- Bolton Street Synagogue
- Chebra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.
- Chevrei Tzedek Congregation
- Chizuk Amuno Congregation
- Congregation Beir Tikvah
- Congregation Tiferes Yisroel
- Federation of Jewish Women's  
Organizations of Maryland
- Hadassah
- Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation  
J Street
- Jewish Federation of Howard County
- Jewish Labor Committee
- Jewish War Veterans
- Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
- Jewish Women International
- Jews For Judaism
- Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah  
Hebrew Congregation
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Ner Tamid Congregation
- Rabbinical Council of America
- Religious Zionists of America
- Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
- Shomrei Emunah Congregation
- Suburban Orthodox Congregation
- Temple Beth Shalom
- Temple Isaiah
- Zionist Organization of America  
Baltimore District

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 359 – Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check – Requirement**

**Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

**February 18, 2026**

**Support with Amendments**

The Baltimore Jewish Council Represents the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish community of Greater Baltimore. The Associated's Jewish Community Center's (JCC'S) operate Early Childhood Learning Centers (ECLC) and there are several other Jewish ECLC's and other childcare centers in our area. We understand the positive intent of this bill, but we are concerned about the real-life negative effects it could have on running childcare centers in Maryland.

Currently it is standard practice that larger ECLC's independently fingerprint and run that information through CJIS, generally receiving those results in 24-48 hours, enabling them to hire staff while they wait for Department's clearance. However, we understand that due to a change in Federal law, private entities may no longer have access to FBI CJIS results which are needed in order to approve a job application for a childcare instructor.

SB359 gives up to 45 days for the Department to let childcare centers know whether a person is eligible for employment and 10 days for an applicant to know the status of their application. This is language taken from the Federal requirements. We understand that currently the Department does not always get that information to ECLC's and other childcare centers within that timeframe, which is the reason for this bill. However, 45 days would mean ECLC's having to shut down classrooms, leaving both the ECLC's and parents in a bind if there is a staff turnover. During a time when over 700 childcare centers closed during covid in Maryland, where we have childcare staffing crisis, 45 days is far too many.

A similar bill (SB708 2023) was introduced and passed a few years ago around camp counselors.<sup>1</sup> We were able to work with the Department of Health and amend the bill to require a 3-business day turn-around period to notify the entity if a staffer was approved and passed their background check.

We ask that SB359 be similarly amended, with the understanding that childcare centers require more background checks. We ask that the Department amend the

<sup>1</sup> [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/chapters\\_noln/Ch\\_226\\_sb0708T.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/chapters_noln/Ch_226_sb0708T.pdf)



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Past President

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Executive Director

10-day status notice to 5-business days and the 45-day clearance notification to 10-business days. While this would still be burdensome, it is more reasonable and would be less detrimental to childcare centers and families that rely on them throughout the state.

## MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Adat Chaim Congregation
- American Jewish Committee
- Americans for Peace Now
  - Baltimore Chapter
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee
- American Red Magen David for Israel
- American Zionist Movement
- Amit Women
- Association of Reform Zionists of America
- Baltimore Board of Rabbis
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- J Street
- Jewish Federation of Howard County
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- Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
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- National Council of Jewish Women
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- Rabbinical Council of America
- Religious Zionists of America
- Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
- Shomrei Emunah Congregation
- Suburban Orthodox Congregation
- Temple Beth Shalom
- Temple Isaiah
- Zionist Organization of America
  - Baltimore District

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report with the above amendments on SB359.

***The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.***

**SB359 and HB635. Letter of Information. The Arc M**

Uploaded by: Ande Kolp

Position: INFO



## HB635 and SB359: Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check Requirements

February 18, 2026

Position: Letter of Information

The Arc Maryland is a statewide training, support, and advocacy organization that is dedicated to advancing and preserving the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Two of our affiliate partners, The Arc Montgomery County and The Arc Prince George's County provide center-based child care to children with disabilities and this law would have impacts on their work to timely hire and retain qualified and safe workers.

Our understanding is that this bill would change the number of Deputy State Superintendents of Schools that can be appointed AND establishing a central unit to process and manage criminal background checks for people working with children. Furthermore, it would lower the age that triggers a background check from 3 to 2 years old.

Questions we have that we hope will be addressed, with assurances made include:

- Does the new centralization of background checks eliminate the need for multiple tests in one year (ie. Is the check still specific to a facility, if not and a person leaves a position after a month to move to another facility, do they need a new check?)
- How long will the background checks be stored in the system?
- We wonder why the school age minimum isn't removed entirely, so all employees working with children are subject to this requirement, as opposed to lowering it?
- Is there a mechanism to ensure timely results are provided, or a process through which employers can receive assistance if a background check is taking too long to process?

- If a potential or current employee has an issue flagged on their background check, and the employee believes the result is inaccurate, is there a process through which an appeal can be initiated?

While it appears that having a central repository for all of this information to be housed is good, we have questions on how it will operate and what oversight will be achieved. As this new repository will affect a person's employment, and there is the possibility of mistaken identity, there should be a clear appeals and oversight process. Additionally, it should be clearly defined how long these checks will be stored, and clarified whether a new check for each employer will still be required.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Ande Kolp, Executive Director  
[www.thearcmd.org](http://www.thearcmd.org)

## **SB 359**

Uploaded by: James Torrence

Position: INFO



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*Senate Bill 359 – Child Care Facilities - Criminal History Records Check - Requirement*

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**February 18, 2026**

**INFORMATIONAL**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is James Torrence, Executive Director of the Maryland Alliance of YMCAs, which represents six independent YMCA associations serving children and families across Maryland. Collectively, our Ys **serve 421,346 Marylanders** from early childhood through older adulthood.

Maryland Ys and Y-affiliated programs operate across **12 jurisdictions**, providing safe, stable, and affordable care that supports working families and children’s development throughout the state. This footprint reflects sustained investment in quality programs and the Y’s role as a trusted provider, with **more than 130 Maryland EXCELS-licensed childcare and Head Start programs**. In addition, Ys **partner with 200 local schools and leads 28 community schools**, supporting student success through wraparound services, enrichment, mentorship and family engagement. **More than 52,000 children** are served annually through Y childcare, afterschool, and summer programs.

Because of our scale, compliance with background check requirements is not abstract, it is a daily operational responsibility. Ys already conduct comprehensive screenings, including:

- Maryland State criminal history record checks;
- FBI national fingerprint-based background checks; and
- Child abuse and neglect registry checks.

We strongly support rigorous screening standards to protect children and maintain public trust. Senate Bill 359 would centralize the review and maintenance of criminal history record checks within MSDE and expand the probationary hiring period to include teachers serving children age two and older.

While we appreciate efforts to improve efficiency and consistency, the fiscal note raises a significant federal compliance concern. Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services advises that the FBI requires each authorized agency to manage its own national background checks and may not permit Maryland State Department of Education to operate as a centralized hub for checks conducted under other statutory authorities. If the FBI does not approve this structure, Maryland could temporarily lose the ability to conduct national fingerprint-based checks until corrective action is taken.

For Ys, even a short interruption would have immediate consequences such as delaying onboarding, disrupting staffing ratios, reducing classroom capacity and impacting families who rely on stable, continuous care to remain in the workforce.

With respect to the probationary expansion, allowing teachers serving two-year-olds to begin under probation may provide some workforce flexibility in a challenging hiring environment. However, any expansion must remain carefully aligned with training requirements, licensing standards, and federal compliance obligations to ensure safety and program quality are not compromised.

Maryland Ys remain committed to strong safety standards, operational clarity and continuity of care for families. We respectfully urge careful attention to the federal alignment issues identified in the fiscal note to avoid unintended disruption to national background check authorization.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Point of Contact**

James Torrence  
Executive Director, Maryland Alliance of YMCAs  
jamestorrence@ymaryland.org