



Testimony - HB 742, Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program - Funding
Favorable
House Ways & Means Committee
February 18, 2026
Elly Cowan on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Wilkins & Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

SEIU Local 500 is in strong support of House Bill 742. This legislation is an important step toward strengthening Maryland's child care infrastructure by supporting family child care providers and expanding child care capacity across the state.

SEIU Local 500 represents early childhood educators and family child care providers who serve children and families in Maryland. Family child care providers are a critical pillar of our child care system. They operate small businesses—from their homes—offering flexible, community-based care that meets the needs of working families, including those with nontraditional work schedules.

Yet family child care providers face significant operational and regulatory challenges that can limit their ability to expand or even sustain their programs. HB 742 addresses these barriers in a way that supports provider stability and encourages capacity growth by providing essential funding.

Maryland continues to face a shortage of child care slots, particularly in underserved and rural communities. Family child care homes are uniquely positioned to help close that gap. They can open more quickly than larger centers, serve mixed-age groups, and operate in neighborhoods where larger facilities may not be feasible. When we support family child care providers, we directly increase access for families who are struggling to find care.

HB 742 will help reduce barriers that prevent family child care providers from opening or expanding their programs and support small business sustainability within the child care sector. It will increase the number of available child care slots across the state and strengthen access in child care deserts and underserved communities

Family child care providers are often women, immigrants, and entrepreneurs who reinvest directly into their communities. Policies that recognize their contributions and remove unnecessary obstacles allow them to grow their businesses and serve more children.

Expanding child care capacity is essential to Maryland's workforce participation and economic growth, with a large return on investment for the state. When families cannot access affordable, reliable care, they are forced to reduce work hours or leave the workforce altogether. Supporting family child care providers is a practical, community-driven strategy to address this challenge.

HB 742 reflects a commitment to growing Maryland's child care supply in a thoughtful and sustainable way. By strengthening family child care, we strengthen families, communities, and the broader economy.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 742.

Thank you for your time and consideration.