

HOUSE BILL 396 - Child Care Centers – Early Childhood Screening for Developmental Disabilities

Position – Support with Amendment

Madame Chairwoman and Committee Members,

Early childhood screening is critically important to ensure that children with potential developmental delays are identified as early as possible. Child care providers, in all settings, are uniquely positioned to make these observations. Child care providers complete training to hold their positions and many have years of experience working with children. They understand children's development and can recognize when there is something that should be further assessed. When children receive early intervention there are long-term benefits. Unfortunately, many children do not receive services for delays until they are in school when the opportunity to make significant gains has been missed resulting in years of additional or special services.

Following is an example of the incredible result that can be accomplished when a child care provider acts on observations to bring a concern to light. During my time as the Director of the Office of Child Care at the Maryland State Department of Education, I had the opportunity to meet with providers throughout the State to discuss various early childhood topics. On one such occasion to discuss developmental screening, a registered family child care provider in Carroll County relayed a story of a child she had in care. This child (an infant) was not turning over or crawling as would have been expected at her age. The child care provider discussed this observation with the parent who took the child to her pediatrician who did not find any concern. The provider, however, continued to raise her concerns with the parent who sought a second opinion. It was then determined that the child had had a stroke. The parent and child care provider received training on how to work with the child and in conjunction with therapists provided the appropriate therapies resulting in a complete recovery with no further delays. This is just one of many examples of how child care providers can ensure children receive the services at the earliest possible point to have the best long-term benefits.

I urge the committee to pass HB396 with the following amendment – the requirement for developmental screening should apply to all child care types – child care center, family child care homes, large family child care homes, and letter of compliance facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

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