



**Senate Bill 890 (Senator King)**  
**Early Childhood Education – Child Care Provider Support Grant Program**  
**(The Child Care Provider Support Act)**  
**FAVORABLE**

February 25, 2021

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in strong support of Senate Bill 890. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just and prosperous future for all Marylanders. We believe this legislation is an important component in the broader effort to make early childhood education and childcare affordable and accessible for every Marylander, especially as we consider the economic impacts of Covid-19.

The support and eventual passage of SB890 will establish the Child Care Provider Support Grant Program, which will allocate \$25,000,000 in grant funding to providers experiencing significant financial strain impacting their ability to enroll and care for children while covering all operational costs. SB890 will require the state to prioritize funding allocation to certain zip codes with high poverty rates and a significant number of childcare providers that have been forced to shutter their doors.

This past November, the Executive Director of Maryland State Childcare Association, Christina Peausch, cited a [National Association for the Education of Young Children survey](#) that reported 87% of child care providers said they anticipated permanently closing within a year if they lost 20% or more of their enrollment.

The [state of Maryland's COVID protocols for childcare providers](#) require that every time a staff member, child, or family member has a confirmed case or exhibits a COVID-19 symptoms, the provider must remain closed through the CDC-regulated quarantine window. These strict guidelines are based on state health metrics and healthcare providers' recommendations -- they are crucial to the effort to keep communities safe and healthy. In the same breath, constant closures have detrimental financial impacts on childcare providers, like many small businesses,

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making them largely dependent on government funding to pay employees, rent, and other expenses.

As children across the country face stunted learning outcomes due to the transition to virtual instruction, it is clear that our kids learn best in a classroom. Prioritizing in-person instruction for pre-kindergarten children entering the early, important stages of socio-academic development will shape the trajectory of educational achievement for entire graduating classes. And, as the pandemic-induced recession continues, data has shown that women, especially mothers, have borne a disproportionate share of unemployment claims filed. A report released earlier this month from the Center for American Progress reported that [women have lost 5.4 million jobs](#) during the recession -- one million more losses than men. Enabling women, many of them mothers, reliable and affordable access to childcare can encourage re-entry into the workforce.

In consideration of the future educational outcomes of children enrolled in pre-kindergarten, the livelihoods of childcare service providers, and the critical importance of supporting working mothers, we urge a favorable report on SB890.

*John B. King*

*Alice Wilkerson*

*Elise Gustafson*

Founder & Board Chair

Executive Director

Policy Intern