

March 30, 2021

**Testimony Concerning HB 1307:
Education – Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs**

Submitted to the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

I am writing to you today on behalf of **Greenway Learning Center for Infants and Children located in Prince Georges County**. Please oppose HB 1307.

I am writing to ask you to PLEASE stop HB1307 from being passed by legislators. As an owner and child care professional I thought Covid-19 was the worst thing to happen to child care but HB 1307 has got Covid-19 beat. We have struggled for years to stop unlicensed and unregulated child care programs and here Maryland is lobbying to bring it back. The fact that so many are supporting this bill is disheartening. The harm that you are doing to the child care profession and the children that will be attending these programs will last a life time. This bill not only gives parents a false sense of security, they will think that their children will be in a licensed, safe and secure program with care givers that have an early childhood background and clear criminal background check, when they are actually putting their children in an unsafe and unregulated program. This opens the door for everyone to start caring for children since this bill does not require training in early childhood education-not everyone should be watching children or even animals. Children by the dozens can be crammed in a classroom being watched by a felon or abuser because HB 1307 allows for anyone to become a provider with no checks or balances to the system. I have operated a quality licensed child care program in Prince Georges County for over 30 years and take pride in the fact that the center and staff meet the strict regulations in place with MSDE. If this bill is passed, what incentive do I have to follow the regulations? Why be licensed? I can turn in my license and operate an unlicensed program with the green flag from Maryland and its legislators. This bill will only hurt the child care industry that is already fighting for its life due to the pandemic. Instead of working against the programs that you deemed ESSENTIAL back in March of 2020 why not work with us providing much needed financial support to keep us in business and some sound guidance for operating our programs safely and with a license. Trust me when I say HB 1307 will have a major negative impact on the child care profession in Maryland. Quality programs will disappear and in its place will be programs that are motivated by money and not educating children or helping parents find quality care. Licensed programs will disappear and unlicensed child care will be the monopoly in Maryland with one question to be answered.....Who is watching the children? Re-opening Maryland's economy depends on QUALITY-LICENSED child care programs not those supported by HB1307. Please save the children of Maryland and the quality child care programs in Maryland by putting an end to HB1307. We should not be in the business of creating a loophole for someone to operate without a license. The public health crisis and economic crisis have presented enormous challenges, but this is not the time to roll back the full approach to licensing in Maryland. We must insist on access to affordable, reliable, licensed child care in all of our diverse child care settings in Maryland.

If any child care programs are struggling with licensing, they need support, not an exemption. Thank you for your time and if you ever want a tour of a quality, licensed child care program our door is always open.

Sincerely,

Patti Smith
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