

February 3, 2021

**Testimony Concerning H.B 608, the Early Childhood Education - Child Care Provider Support Grant Program (The Child Care Provider Support Act)  
Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means**

Jennifer Iverson, Executive Director  
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**Position: SUPPORT**

Prince George's Child Resource Center (PGCRC) envisions vibrant, healthy communities where individuals and families care, support and advocate for each other and invest in creating opportunities for children to develop strong, successful life paths. PGCRC has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they seek child care where their children can thrive.

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY**

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Prince George's County was home to 747 family child care programs and 377 centers. When Governor Hogan ordered the closure of child care centers and family child care homes due to COVID-19, the Maryland State Department of Education created an application process for child care programs to be available to serve essential workers. Our 1,124 licensed child care programs shrank to 435 programs for essential workers only.

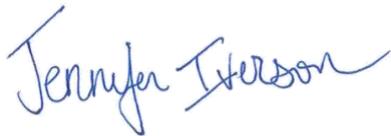
With the permission to re-open granted later in 2020, all area child care programs (whether they stayed opened or closed temporarily) continue to climb back, under-enrolled, with staffing challenges, and the continued stress and fear of COVID-19:

- Child care programs faced challenges that include but are not limited to: operating with a loss of income, concerns about payroll, rent/mortgages, and benefits, and working in close contact/risk of exposure to COVID-19. EPCC programs faced payment delays and under-enrollment.
- Child care programs that closed due to safety concerns or the inability to sustain operations on the limited income from reduced enrollment still had fixed costs of wages and rent. When asked what they would need to reopen, Resource Center survey respondents shared a need for additional funding, thermometers, review of policy and guidance for properly re-opening, cleaning supplies and PPE. Statewide, among closed programs, 71% said they would need financial support to re-open or sustain the business; 29% need grants for re-opening costs.

Child care in Prince George County was in crisis prior to COVID-19 presenting its challenges. Regulated child care, both family child care and center-based programs, had been on a steady decline in our county since 2015. The economic impact on child care has been devastating.

**We have an opportunity to address the child care crisis thanks to Delegate Solomon introducing HB 608, the Child Care Provider Support Act. This legislation calls for flexible grants for licensed child care centers and family child care homes in the Maryland EXCELS program. Therefore, I enthusiastically support HB608.**

There is no time to lose. Each day brings a new challenge for licensed child care programs. We must stabilize the child care sector and the well-being of people who work in child care. We must also rebuild child care better than before. Thank you for supporting the Child Care Provider Support Act. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to talk about ideas for supporting child care in Maryland.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Iverson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Iverson, Executive Director

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