



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 4500 members working in the field of early childhood. We believe children are our most important natural resources and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

February 24, 2021
Position: Supports
HB 944
Ways and Means

MSCCA supports HB 944, the *Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program*.

We appreciate Delegate Solomon's continued efforts to support all child care in our state.

HB 944 is an innovative way to expand and institute a multi-regional approach pilot program for registered family child care providers in order address to grow a declining, in a very necessary, important sector of the child care industry. The bill identifies best practices from a 2-year pilot program that will increase the number of family child care providers and decrease the time it takes for them to become licensed. All child care, including centers, letters of compliance are declining and we hope this model will expand further to support more of the child care and early childhood education sector.

This pilot includes important focus on rural, urban and multi-lingual areas of the state to offer more opportunities for families by increasing child care opportunities. The COVID 19 pandemic has negatively impacted small businesses across the country and in Maryland, which is a primarily small business state.

HB 944 pilot project comes at a time when many child care providers have been forced to close or are operating at increased costs while serving fewer children due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pilot effort will provide data to inform necessary steps to address issues including equity and affordability.

MSDE has stated more than 500 child care programs have closed in less than a year and more than 700 in December 2020 remained unopened. Child care slots are in decline for families who will need all types of child care choices to meet their needs. Pre COVID 19, more than 180,000 children were using licensed, registered child care services in Maryland. Due to the continued decline and projected losses of primarily women owned, operated and working in our industry, families will have less child care and possibly less affordable options in the future. Maryland has not done enough to support child care system with state dollars before and during the pandemic. Legislation such as HB 944 is a step in the right direction to help build a better infrastructure for child care.

The child care and ECE sector is an essential, critical workforce that is the backbone of our economy. HB 944 supports ways to define obstacles, determine as well as address areas of need, strengthen the child care system and expand choices for families so they can earn while children learn.

MSCCA urges a favorable report.

