



**Testimony Concerning HB 608 – Early Childhood Education – Child Care
Provider Support Grant Program 3 (The Child Care Provider Support Act)**

Submitted to House Ways and Means Committee

February 5, 2021

Position: Support

The Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA) is a non-profit association advocating on behalf of approximately 4700+ registered family child care providers and 140 large family child care homes in Maryland. These small businesses are a vital part of the child care delivery system in Maryland and a significant portion of the child care programs that have remained open to essential personnel during the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a workforce, our members normally care for approximately 50% of all children in Maryland under the age of two and typically work alone in mixed-age group settings.

As the association representing family child care in Maryland, we have watched our members struggle to make ends meet during the pandemic and we continue to advocate for programs and legislation to support the industry. Many family child care programs closed at the beginning of the pandemic with 89% reopened. This is good news for families, however reduced enrollments and stringent safety protocols are the new normal and many providers are struggling to pay themselves and/or staff as well as their rent/mortgage, utilities, and food. The ongoing purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other COVID related supplies adds to a program's operating expenses, while the daily threat of a positive diagnosis means closing, a deep cleaning and a lengthy quarantine with no tuition until re-opening.

COVID has widely impacted child care enrollment across the state. Parents who are unemployed or working from home no longer need or can afford child care and these small programs have had to absorb that loss and try to stay afloat with less income but increased costs. Some programs are caring for school-age children and are overseeing their Virtual Learning while school buildings in most counties remain closed. This has helped some, but for those with children

enrolled in the Maryland Scholarship Program it has proven to be a dilemma, since they are caring for children all-day but only paid for before-and-after care due to a lack of Scholarship funding.

There are programs that closed permanently in the beginning of the pandemic due to the fear of transmission, still others closed with the intent of reopening when it became safe. Whatever each program does in the end, there is no doubt that most have taken a financial hit that has been devastating to their business, and it will likely take years for the child care community to recover. HB 608 is a positive step in helping reestablish and strengthen quality child care programs. This bill develops Child Care Provider Support Grants that will award an eligible grantee an amount of no more than 2 months total operating expenses. These expenses can include payroll, rent or mortgage, utility and other similar expenses necessary for the operation of the program. The grant will allow for prioritizing of awards to programs located in high poverty zip codes and/or in areas where a large number of programs have closed. The Grants will begin July 2021, then in 2023, \$25 million dollars will be allocated yearly in the Governor's Budget to continue these Grants. MSFCCA would like to thank Delegate Jared Solomon for including Family Child Care programs and Large Family Homes in this legislation.

Maryland is recognized as a national leader in early care and education policy and giving HB 608 a favorable vote will begin the process of saving an industry that is vitally important to our future, our families and our economy. MSFCCA appreciates the opportunity to weigh in on this legislation and asks for your support with a favorable vote. Feel free to contact Rebecca Hancock, the MSFCCA Vice President of Public Policy at 240-299-0222 (cell) or 301-934-4445 (Home) to answer any questions concerning this testimony.