



**Montgomery County Community Action Board**

**Tiffany Jones, Chair**

**Testimony to Support HB 608 Early Childhood Education – Child Care Provider Support Grant**

**To the Maryland House of Delegates - Ways and Means Committee**

**The Honorable Delegate Anne Kaiser, Chair, and**

**The Honorable Delegate Alonzo Washington, Vice-Chair**

**February 5th, 2021**

My name is Tiffany Jones and I am the Chair of the Montgomery County Community Action Board, which has served as the governing body for Head Start and the Community Action Agency for over 55 years. As Montgomery's designated anti-poverty group, we embrace the Agency's mission to advance social and economic mobility among communities and neighbors through services, partnerships, and advocacy using an equity lens.

I am here on behalf of our Board to express our support for HB 608 Early Childhood Education – Child Care Provider Support Grant Program. Our Board has heard the concerns from childcare providers, like me, who have closed since the pandemic.

While each provider has her own reason, surveys have shown that the cost of delivering care in this environment has greatly increased, reducing the supply of providers, and limiting access. This is exacerbating the burdens faced by lower-income households and the already underpaid childcare workforce, and ultimately, has dire consequences for our State's economy, as parents, especially mothers, cannot return to work.

The COVID-19 emergency has brought to the surface many of the economic, social and health inequalities that have always existed in our community, and magnified the disparities experienced by people of color, including for the black and brown women who provide the majority of child care in Montgomery County.

We therefore fully support HB 608, which will assure financial support for childcare providers so that they can stay in business, maintain a capable workforce, and deliver safe and more affordable childcare.

We are also well-aware of the current challenges facing early care and education programs, many of which were struggling to remain in business long before the current crisis. Since provider revenues come primarily from parent payments, the closure of so many providers have had a devastating impact. With most childcare providers not receiving the same level of financial assistance provided to other types of businesses during the COVID-19 emergency, grant programs must play a vital role to assure a lifeline to Maryland's childcare providers.

To ensure equity, we applaud the legislation's focus on prioritizing funding for those childcare programs serving families who are most heavily impacted by poverty. To assure access to all families, especially those struggling to achieve self-sufficiency, we favor prioritizing grant awards to providers serving communities where the greatest number of centers have closed due to the health and economic impacts of Covid-19.

The Community Action Board is aware that 51% of the State's care programs in Maryland may close if families continue to keep their children home. With an average monthly loss of over \$56,000 reported by childcare centers, it is no surprise that 60% of providers require financial support to remain open. Therefore, we appreciate your passage of the Child Care Provider Support Act, which will help some of the 8,000 childcare programs in Maryland as they face overwhelming fiscal and programmatic challenges.

In closing, I would like to add that our board and agency, along with our sister Maryland Community Action Partnership agencies throughout the state, express our deepest gratitude to you for funding innovative Whole Family/2Gen approaches, which has especially benefitted families served by the TESS Community Action Center in the Long Branch neighborhood during these challenging times.

Thank you.