



Testimony Concerning HB 944 - Growing Family Child Care

Opportunities Pilot Program - Established

Submitted to House Economic Matters Committee

February 24, 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 remained open to essential personnel during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Family child care providers normally care for approximately 50% of all children in Maryland under the age of two in mixed-age group settings, where they also care for other ages (ie: toddlers, preschool and school-age children).

Over the years there has been a significant decline in existing family child care programs and an increased number have closed recently due to the pandemic. It is important to note that family child care providers are almost always women and a significant number are minorities as well. In 1996 there were 12,500 Registered family child care providers in Maryland. As of January 2020, there were 5,091 and as of February 2021 that number dropped again to 4,345, that's a recent decrease of 14.65%. If this decline continues, there will likely be a significant shortage of family child care programs in Maryland's future.

MSFCCA is deeply concerned about this decline. Though there are multiple reasons for it, the lack of financial consistency is a significant concern to many that have left the profession. MSFCCA endorses any legislative actions that would enable new Registered Family Child Care Programs to open and begin serving families. HB 944, the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program, would provide grant funding to local jurisdictions for a 2-year pilot program to help establish quality family child care programs in urban, suburban and rural

locations. This would create programs for children in areas with above average poverty, and guarantee a more equitable access to quality child care. It would also support early education career pathways for women and minorities by allowing them to better financially support their families and in turn strengthen our economy. The success of this Pilot Program would be reported to the General Assembly beginning December 1, 2021, and each year thereafter to continue building a more sustainable workforce of caregivers.

Maryland is a leader in early care and education policy and giving HB 944 a favorable vote will begin the process of saving an industry that is vitally important to our future and families. MSFCCA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this legislation and welcomes any questions or comments. 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.