



**Testimony Concerning Testimony Concerning HB 1307:
“Education – Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs
(Support Youth Development for School-Age Children Act)”
Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee
March 3, 2021**

Position: Oppose

Maryland Family Network (MFN) respectfully but vehemently opposes HB 1307, which would establish sweeping exemptions to critical standards for school age child care in Maryland. This legislation would undermine regulations and weaken safeguards designed to protect children in care arrangements outside their homes, potentially putting them at serious risk. MFN urges the Committee to reject this measure.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education, as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

A primary goal of child care licensing and regulation is safety. Maryland’s nationally lauded body of regulations also reflect the fact that all children in child care, regardless of their age, need safe and healthy environments, and they need providers who are trained to understand how children grow and learn. HB 1307 would place into statute broad and far-reaching exemptions. An ill-defined category of “youth development organizations and programs” would include some entities affiliated with national organizations, yet Maryland has no authority to set, monitor, or enforce compliance with whatever standards such affiliations may entail. Just as troubling, other entities would be exempt from regulation simply by dint of operating as a subcontractor to a school or operating in a low-income community. Although we do not believe the intent of this last provision is to effectively relegate students living in high-poverty areas to care situations with less oversight, we fear that may be a consequence.

Benefits to program licensure include access to the Child Care Scholarship (Subsidy) Program, oversight and inspection by trained licensing specialists, and in many cases reimbursement for meals and snacks served (helping to offset costs for families). Additionally, licensed programs have stronger connections and access to resources and training that support the inclusion of children with disabilities and special needs. There are pathways and resources available for youth development programs serving school-age children to become licensed—as indeed many have.

In sad contrast, alarming examples from around the country demonstrate the potential for abuse and neglect in unregulated and under-regulated child care settings.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report for HB 1307.

