



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 944 (Delegate Solomon)
Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program-Established
Ways and Means Committee
FAVORABLE**

February 24, 2021

To Chairwoman Kaiser and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in support of House Bill 944. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just, and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders.

It is well established that the first years of a child's life are deemed critical for a child's health, learning, and development. Besides a child's family, child-care providers are influential as they provide necessary experiences for a child's development. According to the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), 12% of children live in poverty within Maryland, which has improved over the years. Still, we see an increase in young children not receiving education or schooling and not proficient in reading and math levels. This information is quite concerning, and we believe greater access to quality child care programs would help address these issues. The Division of [Early Childhood under the Department of Education for Maryland](#) agrees that child care and early education are crucial for developing social skills, assisting with pre-literacy, and necessary mathematical skills and concepts.

Besides the educational benefits from child care, children's awareness of their environment and social/interpersonal skills are also affected. A study from [the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health](#), most children who attended daycare had better behavior and social skills than children cared for at home. The Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program Act, gives child care facilities the opportunity to grow by giving them the resources needed to provide to Maryland's youth, which benefits them as they mature and get older.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic has shown us, reliable, quality child care is a critical issue for supporting working parents, especially working mothers and essential workers. For these reasons, Strong Future Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 944.

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland,

John B. King
Founder & Board Chair

Alice Wilkerson
Executive Director

Rachelle Wakefield
Policy Intern