

montgomery moving forward

mobilizing leaders to solve our biggest problems together

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February 22, 2021

Esteemed Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF), a collective impact initiative of Nonprofit Montgomery, is committed to advancing equitable, accessible systems change in the early care and education (ECE) sector in Montgomery County. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, MMF convened over 50 labor, business, education, philanthropic, and nonprofit leaders in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. This diverse cross-sector Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition understands that a diverse, resilient early care and education workforce is necessary for our state's economic recovery.

MMF supports HB 944, the *Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program*, which aims to identify best practices from a 2-year pilot program that will increase the number of family child care providers and decrease the time it takes for them to become licensed.

This pilot project comes at a time when many family child care providers have been forced to close or are operating at increased costs while serving fewer children due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pilot effort will yield important findings to inform necessary strategies aimed at increasing the availability of family child care in rural, urban, and suburban settings which is critical to addressing access, equity, and affordability gaps in this sector.

According to a May 2020 Maryland Family Network survey of early care and education providers, 51% of respondents said they might close if children are kept home as a result of the pandemic. Most child care programs operate on razor thin profit margins, which leaves them particularly vulnerable when an economic downturn hits. According to an interactive calculator, "child care providers are facing, on average, a 47 percent increase in operating costs during the pandemic, with even higher increases for programs serving three- and four-year-olds." In Maryland, providers are facing an average of 53 percent increase in costs.¹ Family child care programs, the primary providers serving essential personnel during the height of the pandemic, remain unable to meet their financial obligations and require assistance to remain operational.

HB944 will invest in expanding sustainable early care and education career pathways for providers, and inform what is needed to strengthen the infrastructure of family child care to ensure the sector's resilience during challenging times. Moreover, this bill's investment in the ECE sector will demonstrate commitment to building a more equitable sector that is led by women and women of color who are on the frontlines of supporting the workforce of today and nurturing the workforce of tomorrow.

¹ Center for American Progress, September 3, 2020

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2020/09/03/489900/true-cost-providing-safe-child-care-coronavirus-pandemic/>

ECE is an economic and social justice imperative and a pillar of Maryland's economy. **We urge you to give HB944 a favorable report.**

Respectfully and sincerely,

Montgomery Moving Forward Co-Chairs and Members of the Early Care and Education Workforce
Advocacy Coalition

Lindsey Allard Agnamba, CEO, School Readiness Consulting; **Laura Bardini**, Executive Director, Rockville Day Care Association, Inc.; **Kevin Beverly**, Economic Development Advocate; **Rosalba Bonilla-Acosta**, Director, CentroNia; **Bob Buchanan**, Buchanan Partners and 2030 Group; **Jody Burghardt**, Division Director, Children, Youth and Family Services, Shepphard Pratt; **Ruby Daniels**, Director, Maryland State Family Child Care Association; **Stewart Edelstein**, Education Advocate; **Sharon Friedman**, Director, Montgomery Moving Forward; **Martine Sadarangani Gordon**, Vice President of Programs, Washington Area Women's Foundation; **Michelle Green**, Executive Director, Montgomery Child Care Association; **Joanne Hurt**, Executive Director, Wonders Early Learning + Extended Day; **Christina Lopez**, President, Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEOYC); **Susan Madden**, Montgomery Moving Forward, Co-Chair and Chief Government Relations Officer, Montgomery College; **Benjamin Orr**, President and CEO of the Maryland Center on Economic Policy; **Christina Peusch**, Executive Director, Maryland State Child Care Association; **Laura Weeldreyer**, Executive Director, Maryland Family Network; **Tiffany Jones**, Family Childcare Provider; **Sharon Strauss**, Executive Director, Community Action Board; **Lisette Engel**, Vice Chair, Community Action Board; **Charlene Muhammad**, Headstart Program Manager, Community Action Board