



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 944

Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program- Established

House Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees
February 24, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports HB 944. This bill would establish the "Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program" to increase and sustain the supply of family child care. A family child care home is typically operated by a provider in her own residence. The provider undergoes background checks, a prescribed course of training, and safety inspections prior to being licensed. Group size cannot exceed eight children, with no more than two children under age 2. Family child care homes are regulated by MSDE's Office of Child Care.

Expanding the supply of registered family child care providers would provide low-income working families in underserved communities more high quality early child care options. Low-income working parents face several challenges related to work schedules (greater likelihood to have part time work, to work nontraditional hours, to have fluctuating schedules) that may make family child care more appealing. When choosing child care, parents balance decisions about location, cost, and availability with multiple work and family factors. For low income working families, choices may be constrained by limited resources.

Research indicates characteristics of the care setting and of the caregiver, as well as the availability, accessibility, and affordability of the provider, are important to parents, and parents often made decisions based on these issues. According to Maryland Family Network's 2021 Child Care Demographics, the average weekly cost of full-time family child care is less than care provided in a child care center.

Montgomery County's program, on which the pilot would be based, was designed to expand the supply of registered family child care providers in underserved communities and to encourage the participation of women who might face barriers to becoming registered has shown remarkable success. Program activities include outreach to marginalized communities, including those in which English is not the primary languages, mentoring, some financial incentives, and consultation on best business practices. Results have included a major reduction in the time it takes to get licensed, from up to a year down to approximately four months. Piloting this program in other jurisdictions could help expand the supply of quality child care while supporting the efforts of low-income women--many in communities of color--to establish successful small businesses.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 944.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.