

Hearing Testimony February 5, 2021
House Ways and Means Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC

House Bill 608 – Early Childhood Education – Child Care Provider Support Grant Program
(The Child Care Provider Support Act)

SUPPORT

I am writing today to speak on behalf of the Service Employees International Union, Local 500 - the collective bargaining representative of home-based child care providers who participate in the Maryland State Child Care Scholarship program to speak in support of the Child Care Provider Support Act, House Bill (HB) 608. SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Staff and Faculty at several colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people.

When Maryland needed Child Care for essential employees, Child Care providers stepped up. With little information and many concerns about their own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of their families, Child Care providers were there for Maryland's families in the first days of the pandemic. The implementation of the essential child care plan was chaotic and difficult for many providers to navigate. Yet providers continued to make sure the doctors, nurses, grocery store employees and others had a safe place for their children. And with the cuts in the number of children they were able to have in their care, many providers were providing care despite losing money every day they were open. Consequently, throughout the state of Maryland, Child Care providers who opened their door during the pandemic are struggling to make up for the lost income during 2020.

And that is only half of the story. Some providers who have pre-existing conditions or family members with health concerns made a difficult decision to not re-open or not provide child care until the pandemic was better controlled in Maryland. They have had little to no support during this year of challenges. Many were locked out of the unemployment system and stayed up until all hours trying to get a call back from an unresponsive and overwhelmed system. At the same time, most family childcare providers were locked out of the Paycheck Protection Programs because of payroll requirements or other small business rules that eliminated these small women-owned businesses.

We are calling on the legislature to support the Child Care Provider Support Act, House Bill (HB) 608 to save our state's vital childcare infrastructure. As a union that represents 20,000 working people in the region, we know that working families repeatedly tell us that child care is one of their biggest hurdles. And as a union that represents education professionals, most of whom are

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women, we know that this burden falls primarily on women. We must also not forget that the family child care providers themselves are small businesswomen who are vital to the success of their neighborhoods. If we want Maryland to re-open and survive the pandemic, we must support Child Care providers. With schools and most camps closed indefinitely, and vulnerable family members unable to provide support like before, child care has never been more critical. In a country where 40% of our labor forces has children under the age of 18, resuming economic activity — particularly for women who still tend to shoulder the lion's share of care giving responsibilities — will depend on addressing the need for child care.ⁱ

SEIU Local 500 would like to say a special thank you to Delegate Jared Solomon for his leadership on this critical issue. **We ask for your support for HB 608 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.**

ⁱ *"Child Care Shortage Looms"*, The Baltimore Sun. June 8, 2020