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Good afternoon, my name is Ruby Daniels, I am the President of the Maryland State Family Child Care Association and I would like to thank Delegate Kaiser, the Chair of this Committee and Delegate Solomon, the Bill Sponsor as well as the Committee for this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the 4700+ Registered Family Child Care providers and Large Family Homes in Maryland.

Our members unanimously support HB 608, the Child Care Provider Support Grant Program. This legislation will benefit child care programs that have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. These smaller businesses are a vital part of the child care delivery system and many are in desperate need of resources to help them open up or remain open.

Provider incomes have dropped, enrollments have dropped but costs and safety protocols have increased. The daily threat of a positive COVID diagnosis means a program must close, deep clean the environment and endure a lengthy quarantine with no tuition until re-opening. This threat as well as a fear of transmission has caused some programs to close permanently and still others hoping to open again when it is safe, if they can do so financially.

For months many family child care providers have cared for school-agers who would normally be in school but are now Virtually Learning due to school buildings in most counties being closed. Providers who participate in MSDE's Scholarship Program are not receiving payment for these school-agers that are in the program for the entire day, they are only receiving before and after care payments. In essence, these providers are working a full-day but only being paid for a few hours a day.

In the beginning of the pandemic and for months, small group environments were key to essential personnel continuing to work and many family child care providers stepped-up,

opened-up and did their part. The funds awarded as a result of this Grant Program will make the difference between many of these programs remaining in business or closing permanently.

HB 608 is a positive start in helping reestablish and strengthen quality child care environments for the children of Maryland. It will establish a Child Care Provider Grant Program that will award the grantee an amount of no more than 2 months total operating expenses. These expenses can include payroll, rent or mortgage, utility and other similar expenses necessary for the operation of the program. The funds will prioritize awards to programs located in high poverty zip codes and/or in areas where a large number of programs have closed.

The toll that COVID has taken on the child care industry is devastating and will likely take years to recover. We want to thank Delegate Jared Solomon for including family child care and Large Family Homes in this legislation.

Your favorable support on HB 608 will begin the process of saving an industry that is vitally important to our future, our families and our economy. Feel free to contact me at 410-531-5159 with any questions concerning our support.