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Senate Bill 480 - Child Care Stabilization Grant Program and Child Care Expansion Grant Program - Established Senate Budget and Taxation Committee SUPPORT

February 15, 2022

Esteemed Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation 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 representative 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.

Montgomery Moving Forward and the Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition enthusiastically supports SB 480, Child Care Stabilization Grant Program and Child Care Expansion Grant Program - Established. We are grateful for Senators Hester, King, and West's leadership and advocacy for the child care sector and the support by the entire Maryland General Assembly for your work on behalf of child care providers during the COVID pandemic. Your continued support and recognition of the essential role of the child care sector to our state's economic success is invaluable as we work together to create a more equitable and resilient early care and education system in Maryland.

Senate Bill 480 establishes a state funded Child Care Expansion Grant Program to assist with financial barriers including COMAR required staff training, criminal background check fees, cleaning supplies which have increased in price and use due to pandemic, educational supplies, and allows for capital or facility improvements to expand child care availability. The legislation also requires MSDE to award the grant no more than three months after an application is submitted. This is an important provision as the goal is to stabilize the sector with urgent and efficient measures. This program will be a lifeline for struggling child care businesses and can also serve as a model for other states.

According to the Maryland Early Childhood Advisory Council, there are 855 fewer child care providers in Maryland now than in March 2020; decline of almost 15%. Family and center-based child care providers continue to close due to decreased enrollment, increased expenses and critical staffing shortages. MSDE data shows that of the 97% of child care businesses that are currently open, 44% of them are under 50% enrolled. 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 Without federal PPP support and the numerous Covid Relief packages, including the American Rescue Plan Act Child Care Stabilization grants, most child care businesses would not survive. We need to invest in child care now. **Without child care, the current workforce cannot work and the investment in our workforce of tomorrow will suffer.**

Another significant consideration is the alignment of SB 480 with the Blueprint for Maryland’s universal expansion of prekindergarten sites through mixed delivery systems including community-based programs. The Blueprint addresses prekindergarten through a five-year phased in mixed delivery system with a minimum 50/50 split for public schools and community-based providers. Maryland will need child care businesses to achieve these goals. SB 480 is an important investment for child care and can facilitate expanding and building capacity, providing access to pre-kindergarten and school-age wrap-around care to families in Maryland.

Montgomery Moving Forward and the Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition support Senate Bill 480 as a pathway to building a sustainable ECE system to ensure affordable child care options for today’s workforce and long-term investments in the workforce of tomorrow.

Early care and education is an economic and social justice imperative and a pillar of Maryland’s economy. **We urge you to give SB 480 a favorable report.**

Respectfully and sincerely,

Montgomery Moving Forward Co-Chairs, Kevin Beverly; Susan Madden; and Kathy Stevens, and the following Members of the Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition: **Lindsey Allard Agnamba**, Chief Executive Officer, **School Readiness Consulting**; **Laura Bardini**, Executive Director, **Rockville Day Care Association, Inc.**; **Rosalba Bonilla**, Maryland State Director, **CentroNia**; **Larry Bram**, Senior Vice President, Innovation & Program Development, **Easter Seals Serving DC|MD|VA**; **Bob Buchanan**, Partner, **Buchanan Partners**; **Jody Burghardt**, Children and Family Services Division Director, **Sheppard Pratt**; **Francisco Cartagena**, Information Technology Project Manager, **City of Gaithersburg**; **Sally D’Italia**, Co-Chair, **DC Directors Exchange**; **Ruby Daniels**, President, **Maryland State Family Child Care Association**; **Joanne Hurt**, Executive Director, **Wonders Early Learning and Extended Day**; **Tiffany Jones**, Owner/Director, **Precious Moments Family Childcare**; **Maryland Center on Economic Policy**; **Christina Lopez**, President, **Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children**; **Christina Peusch**, President, **Maryland State Child Care Association**; **Travis B. Simon**, Director of Political and Legislative Affairs, **SEIU Local 500**

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/>