

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 480:

Child Care Stabilization Grant Program and Child Care Expansion Grant Program - Established

TO: Hon. Guy Guzzone, Chair, and Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee

FROM: Caleb Jasso, Policy Advocate

DATE: February 16, 2022

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for better jobs, skills training, and wages for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. JOTF supports **Senate Bill 480** as a means to provide financial support to licensed child care providers in the State that are in danger of closing in the next 12 months due to financial hardship. The Child Care Expansion Grant Program is intended to increase access and availability of licensed child care providers in the State by providing financial assistance to new or existing child care providers.

Affordable and accessible childcare is paramount to the success of any economy. According to the Census Bureau, there are over 15 million children in the U.S. who are under age six and regularly require childcare. More than 300,000 of those children live in [Maryland](#). Ensuring that Marylanders have access to affordable childcare is crucial for their peace of mind - how could a parent go to work knowing that their child is not being properly cared for, or that their only option for child care is now 1 hour away versus 30 minutes due to a recent closure? Furthermore, with fewer licensed providers, the potential for unlicensed illegal services will grow which can pose a danger to parents and to children due to the lack of regulation. According to the **Maryland Office of Child Care (OCC)** found within the Maryland Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood, child care services are classified as [formal](#) and [informal](#):

- **Informal** child care is when a friend, relative, or nanny cares for a child in the family home or in his or her own home, receives no compensation of any kind for providing care, or provides care for less than 20 hours per month.
- **Formal** child care includes child care centers and family child care homes. OCC has standards for these facilities to be licensed or registered. **Providers who are not licensed or registered are offering illegal and potentially dangerous child care.**

The Child Care Expansion Grant Program is intended to increase access and availability of licensed child care providers in the State by providing financial assistance to new or existing child care providers. This is a necessary action because it will ensure that parents have access to formal child care services that can be regulated and reviewed annually. Without formal child care access, many parents may have to make professional sacrifices, including working less, so that they may guarantee that their child has proper supervision. **Senate Bill 480** will have a profound impact on low-wage workers and their families because it will provide them peace of mind knowing that their child is safe while they are at work.

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Additionally, because the bill provides funding for new child care providers, it has the potential to increase job opportunities for those who want to work in the child care industry.

Not knowing where your child is going to go while you are at work, or even how they will be treated while they are in the care of someone else is a truly terrifying, unnerving feeling. Senate Bill 480 seeks to rectify this fear by providing the financial resources new or struggling child care providers need to begin or continue operations - this concept came out of the COVID-19 pandemic and has since presented an opportunity to expand funding as a means to increase child care availability. As advocates for policies that have a positive impact on low-wage workers, JOTF strongly supports Senate Bill 480 as it has the potential to increase the ability for people to work and to have the time to seek out additional skill training while their children are well taken care of. For these reasons, JOTF urges a favorable vote on **Senate Bill 480**.

For more information, contact:

Caleb Jasso / Policy Advocate / caleb@jotf.org / 626-224-3543