

## TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

### Support - Senate Bill 480 - Child Care Stabilization Grant Program - Child Care Expansion Grant Program- Established

*Budget and Taxation Committee*

*February 16, 2022*

Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chairman Rosapepe and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in support of **Senate Bill 480 - Child Care Stabilization Grant Program - Child Care Expansion Grant Program**. I would like to thank Senators Katie Fry Hester, Nancy King, and Chris West for sponsoring this important legislation, and the Committee for providing the opportunity for my testimony to be heard.

The COVID-19 pandemic has depleted the number of childcare providers in the state. Ten percent have shuttered permanently so far due to financial hardship, pandemic restrictions limiting the number of spaces, staffing shortages and extraordinary additional expenses including personal protective equipment (PPE). Childcare providers are essential to Maryland and our economy. When parents struggle to find reliable, affordable, and safe childcare with open slots, they choose to leave the workforce - the results of which are harmful to our state and economy. In addition, these children miss out on early learning opportunities that may impact them in the future as they struggle to catch up.

SB480 childcare stabilization grants provide critically needed funds to staunch the closures, keep centers open and parents in the workforce. Additionally, the childcare expansion grant program will help expand existing licensed childcare operations, and help fund new operations to increase available slots, provide financial supports for staffing, education, supplies, and capital improvements. This legislation tackles the immediate threat the pandemic poses to our remaining childcare providers and charts a stable path forward through COVID-19.

If passed, SB480 will be a win for parents, childcare providers and most importantly children throughout Maryland.

For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for Senate Bill 480. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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