

montgomery moving forward

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House Bill 995 - Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations House Ways and Means Committee SUPPORT

March 2, 2022

Esteemed Members of the House Ways and Means 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 HB 995, Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations. We herald Delegate Solomon's leadership and advocacy for the child care sector and the support by the entire Maryland General Assembly for your work on behalf of children, families, and 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 for Maryland.

HB 995 requires that, among other things, the State Department of Education establishes a process for granting presumptive eligibility for a subsidy under the Child Care Scholarship Program and reduces the barriers faced by parents applying for child care scholarships. The legislation also requires MSDE to pay child care providers within 10 days of receipt of their invoice and implement related practices to improve the accessibility and transparency of the scholarship program. These are important provisions as the goal is to stabilize the sector with urgent and efficient measures that aim to support, rather than penalize, parents and providers.

Without child care, the current workforce cannot work and the investment in our workforce of tomorrow will suffer. Montgomery Moving Forward and the Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition support House Bill 995 and the opportunity it presents for creating a more equitable process for all parents seeking to participate in the child care scholarship program. In addition, the Bill's prioritization of timely payment of child care providers will address a long-standing issue that has burdened child care providers who operate on thin margins while providing quality, continuous care for the children and families in their care. HB 995 is an important building block towards creating a

sustainable ECE system that both ensures accessible, affordable child care options for today's workforce and reliable investments in the workforce of tomorrow.

Early care and education is an economic and equity imperative and a pillar of Maryland's economy. **We urge you to give HB 995 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: Rosalba Bonilla, Maryland Director, **CentroNía**; Larry Bram, Senior Vice President, Innovation & Program Development, **Easter Seals Serving DC|MD|VA**; Bob Buchanan, Buchanan Partners and the 2030 Group; Jody Burghardt, Children and Family Services Division Director, **Sheppard Pratt**; **Francisco Cartagena**, I.T Project Manager, City of Gaithersburg; Ruby Daniels, President, **Maryland State Family Child Care Association**; Michelle Martineau Green, Executive Director, **Montgomery Child Care Association, Inc.**; Joanne Hurt, Executive Director, **Wonders Early Learning & Extended Day**; Tiffany Jones, Family Child Care Provider, **Montgomery County Head Start Parent Policy Council, Chair, Community Action Board**; Christina Lopez, President, **Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC)**; Benjamin Orr, President and CEO of **Maryland Center on Economic Policy**; Christina Peusch, Executive Director, **Maryland State Childcare Association**; Travis B. Simon, Director of Political and Legislative Affairs, **SEIU Local 500**