

March 14, 2023

Testimony Concerning Support for SB 881

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Budget and Tax

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As the child care resource center for both Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties, we have seen first-hand the impact that the Pandemic had on child care and families seeking child care. The slim margin that existed pre-Covid disappeared; programs could simply not afford to pay staff and many never recovered. Today, families cannot find child care because the business model has failed. We must do everything we can to work toward professional wages for child care providers.

Thanks to your leadership one year ago, legislation to create hiring bonuses was approved and became law. This was an important step toward solving early childhood educator compensation. We hope you share our confusion and concern that these dollars have not moved to the child care provider community after all this time.

We urge your support for SB 881, which is a continuation of the bill you approved last year. That bill had an end date, and the agency needs more time. Unfortunately, the child care workforce does not have the luxury of time. They are struggling with critical workforce shortages. These bonuses and support are important for child care centers and family child care right now to incentivize, recruit, retain and train new people to do this crucial work. **This crucial legislation also has long-term impact on successful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Diverse delivery of PreK in child care requires a strong infrastructure.** Parents are counting on it. Early childhood educators are counting on it.

We need every penny to invest, support and incentivize this essential field. **We urge your support for legislation.** Thank you for your leadership for our community.

