

March 14, 2023

Testimony Concerning Support for SB 881

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Budget and Tax

**Patti Smith-Director
Greenway Learning Center
7501 Greenway Center Drive #110
Greenbelt, MD 20770
301-474-6770
welovekids.gic@verizon.net**

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. We 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. Parents are counting on it. Early childhood educators are counting on it. **Maryland's youngest citizens are counting on it.** The educators deemed "essential" during the pandemic are counting on it. They have worked tirelessly during the pandemic; teaching, loving, cleaning, sanitizing, taking temps, social distancing, working while masked and most importantly caring for children during a pandemic. These educators deserve extra compensation, were promised extra compensation and yet their pockets still remain EMPTY. Educators have watched financial bailouts and bonuses go to bars and restaurants while educators have received nothing but empty promises. These funds are needed so educators can keep their health insurance, feed their families, staff their programs and to keep their business doors open. Please support SB 881 and increase the amount of funding.

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.

Sincerely,
The Staff of Greenway Learning Center for Infants and Children.