



**Testimony Concerning SB 881**  
**“Child Care Providers and Employees – Bonuses – Alterations”**  
**Submitted to the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**  
**March 15, 2023**

**Position: Support**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 881, which would provide hiring and retention bonuses for child care workers to help offset the costs associated with the hiring process. These public dollars will provide desperately needed support for a struggling child care sector that is inarguably essential to the public good.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

Child care providers have been called “the workforce behind the workforce.” Their mostly small businesses—which play a preeminent role in enabling parents to earn and children to learn—are struggling for their survival. Some have already closed permanently. Others remain open but face the double-barreled crisis of not only drastically reduced enrollment, but higher expenses associated with health protocols, intensive sanitation, and—crucially—staffing shortages. Maryland providers may have managed to keep their doors open thus far, but for too many, their current level of operation is unsustainable.

The slow-motion collapse of child care will pose enormous barriers to resurrecting the economy and getting citizens back to work. Several states have launched efforts to sustain child care providers during this period. We commend Maryland’s similar efforts up to this point. But they have been insufficient to meet the ongoing challenge we face.

The quality and sustainability of a child care program are directly and overwhelmingly determined by its staff. As Maryland’s economy attempts to rebound from the worst effects of the pandemic, child care programs need to compete successfully in attracting and retaining qualified employees. The incentives created by this legislation will be essential to this effort. For these reasons, MFN urges your favorable consideration of SB 881.