

February 21, 2023

**Testimony Concerning SB 873:
“Child Care Provider Stabilization Program – Established”**

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Education, Energy and Environment

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Child care providers are in crisis, and so are families, and Prince George’s County is no exception. I am no exception.

SB 873 calls for monthly payments to licensed child care providers who are willing and able to enroll children who receive a subsidy through the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP). I urge EVERYONE to support this legislation.

Through this bill, I could receive as much as \$2,500 per month to be used for cleaning and food supplies, early childhood educator wages, and the ongoing expenses of running my program and being available to the families counting on me so that they can go to work. I thank Senator Washington for leading this bill and for seeing what it takes to do this every day.

- As a licensed provider of 44 children ages 8 weeks-5 Years of age, our Center has always enrolled children that receive financial assistance through the Dept. of Social Services (now referred to as CCS). This program is a nightmare to work with-the State is always behind in payments and is plagued with issues processing paperwork. Through all of the issues with the program Greenway Learning Center has continued to enroll low income children because we recognize the importance of quality care for ALL.

In Prince George’s County, area child care providers like me are experiencing deep challenges with funding/finances, staffing and enrollment which are all totally intertwined. The stabilization funds offered in 2021 and 2022 were an important step. There is more to be done.

Monthly grants from the staff would be a great asset to our Center and I am sure all providers in Maryland. We are all struggling to re-build from the pandemic and currently experiencing the worst staffing shortage in my 40 year hiring history. This funds could be used to attract qualified teachers to the field and could be used to reward the essential staff that have worked during the entire pandemic. They were deemed essential during the pandemic and have been working on the front line the entire time with little to no recognition or respect. Child Care needs these grants to survive.

We need help rebuilding our businesses and keeping our quality, relationship-based practices strong, so we can be there for working parents and for young children. The quality of child care, and the experience of the birth-to-five years, are crucial to school readiness and supporting working families.

We must continue to take steps to stabilize the child care sector and the well-being of people who work in child care, and we must also rebuild child care better than before.

The child care crisis is not over in Maryland. Thank you for your leadership and your support for child care through recent General Assembly sessions. There's more to do and we can do it together. Thank you for supporting SB 873.

I encourage all of you to visit a local child care program and home provider to see us in action. We are essential and respect for our work is needed. Our door is open and we welcome all to come spend some time in our shoes-it is not an easy job and the pay is minimal but the rewards are enormous in the work we are doing for Maryland's youngest and most valuable citizens.

Thank You,
Patti Smith-Director
Greenwaylearningcenter.com