



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Favorable with Amendments

House Bill 868 - Child Care Provider Stabilization Program - Established

House Ways and Means Committee

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 6,400 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic health and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

House Bill 868 establishes a Child Care Provider Stabilization Program within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide “stability funding” to eligible child care providers across the State. MSDE will be tasked with developing an application process and awarding funding on a monthly basis to qualifying child care providers.

The Maryland Chamber of Commerce and its members are tremendously supportive of measures that aim to address the State’s current child care shortage. The child care crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is having an exceedingly negative impact on workers’ ability to participate in the labor market. The shortage in child care is a major factor contributing towards the consistent structural inflation that our business and consumers are currently facing.

It is common practice for legislation that establishes a funding program to incorporate a sunset and evaluation requirement. The Chamber requests that an amendment be incorporated to include a five-year sunset with a requirement for MSDE to produce an evaluation to ensure the program is effective and can become sustainable.

HB 868 will help ensure that Maryland’s child care providers have the financial resources they need to deliver these essential services to Maryland’s families. By making this funding available to any qualified providers, HB 868 will allow these essential institutions to stay open for business and continue to serve communities across our State.

HB 868 is a critical step towards fixing the many challenges facing Maryland’s child care infrastructure. Investing in these vital small businesses will help get Marylanders back to work and our State’s economy back on track. For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **Favorable Report with amendments** on **HB 868**.