



House Bill 868

Child Care Provider Stabilization Program - Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committees

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From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 868. This bill would provide additional support to licensed child care providers throughout Maryland. It comes at a time when child care, community, and county resources are pushed to their brink.

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the shortage of licensed child care providers to support the safe care of Maryland's kids and support the state's working families. Maryland does not currently have enough licensed providers to meet the needs of such families balancing work, child care, and the ongoing pandemic, as many providers had to cease operation due to public health risk and financial instability associated with COVID-19. Those providers that remain in operation are struggling to stay afloat, and many are unable to provide reliable child care.

HB 868 helps address these issues. The bill would establish a Child Care Provider Stabilization Program and Stability Fund to support providers throughout the state. The fund would provide a monthly stipend to providers to support their operations, capital projects, and to offset other expenses. Impactfully, the monthly stipend would be based on the number of children a provider cares for that receive a child care subsidy from the State.

While counties have creatively addressed the needs of reliable and safe child care, they welcome increased State contribution to stabilize the industry. County departments of parks and recreation, for example, have provided after school and interactive programming, and county governments have partnered with local nonprofits around the state to lessen the impact of Maryland's child care crisis. However, these programs do not take the place of longer-term and dedicated child care providers.

Consistent and safe child care is critical for economic development, successful families and communities, and the development of children. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 868 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.