

February 27, 2023

**Testimony Concerning HB 868:
“Child Care Provider Stabilization Program – Established”**

Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee

Position: Favorable

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Thank you, Senator Washington, for your leadership on HB 868. HB868 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 your support for this legislation.

My name is Mary Beth. I’ve had the privilege to be a part of the Prince George’s Child Resource Center team since 2015. One of the things I get to do is connect with early childhood educators in centers and family child care homes, listen to their stories, and be led by where they want action.

As you consider this bill, I want you to notice please that the field of early childhood educators – they aren’t ok. Early childhood educators are people, people who need to be healthy and well, compensated and supported, to show up every day. They are showing up, but we are taking them for granted. They are part of the fabric of our communities - necessary so that parents can confidently go to work and children are in safe, nurturing learning environments.

In December 2022, researchers shared that nationally, 81% of center-based and 73% of family child care providers report stress, anxiety, depression as a result of staff shortages - feelings they know are impacting their abilities to provide high quality careⁱ.

Stabilization grants approved by Congress in early 2021 made a huge difference. These investments rolled out in Maryland in a few rounds, and ended in 2022. I offer two things to consider about that:

1. It is not reasonable to expect those funds to last. They arrived in a moment of mounting debt for child care programs and personally for the child care workforce. They ended in a moment of intensity of gas prices and grocery prices while competition for wages pulled more and more people away from this work.
2. Providers in Maryland share that they’re still here because of those grants, but for how much longer? The number one thing they’d need in order to stay? Competitive wagesⁱⁱ.

We can not afford to lose anyone else, and we must build a system that new educators and program leaders can be a part of, where they can support themselves and their own families, as they support all of our families.

What are the interventions? They need dollars to operate, and professional wages for themselves and staff. They need housing and groceries they can afford. They need health care. They need dollars to make these things possible.

The quality of child care, and the experience of the early years, are crucial to school readiness and supporting working families. The core of the quality of child care is the caregiver educator herself.

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 is more to do and we can do it together. Please see what it takes to do this every day, and approve HB 868.

ⁱ “Overdue: A New Child Care System that Supports Children, Families and Providers” December 2022
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7cf2f62c45da32f3c6065e/t/63a1d9582916181ff4b729be/1671551320275/overdue+new+child+care+system+factsheet+dec2022.pdf>

ⁱⁱ “Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now” Maryland fact sheet December 2022
<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/maryland+naeyc+2022+fall+survey+0.pdf>