

March 1, 2024

**Testimony in Support of HB 1314 the Right to Start Act
Submitted to the House Economic Matters Committee**

Jennifer Iverson, Executive Director
Child Resource Connect
9475 Lottsford Road, Suite 202
Largo, MD 20774
240-418-9051
jiverson@childresource.org

Child Resource Connect (CRC), formerly Prince George's Child Resource Center, has been providing services to Prince George's County since 1990. CRC helps create healthy and nurturing environments for children by supporting their families and educating their caregivers. Through a comprehensive array of programming—direct services for children and families, education and coaching for child care providers, and grassroots advocacy in partnership with stakeholders at all levels—we work towards communities in which all families have access to high-quality child care and the resources and support they need to build stable, secure environments in which children can thrive.

Thank you for supporting the Right to Start Act, which along with much needed budget investments in child care, takes a timely and clever approach.

HB1314 calls for eliminating the \$300 business filing fee for all new businesses for their first year. This can give a valuable boost to local businesses starting strong and creating jobs. All established businesses will continue to pay the annual filing fee. The Right to Start Act calls for allocating half of the revenue from the annual business license fees collected by the state and investing in the Child Care Scholarship Program; Maryland's GoFCC Grant to encourage more people to start up their family child care business; and Maryland's PreK Expansion Grants.

Businesses large and small that are counting on employees are counting on child care providers to be ready and available to those employees! We see first-hand in Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties:

- With expanded family eligibility in the Child Care Scholarship Program, more of these businesses are seeing the benefit of access to subsidy, so that families can choose the child care arrangement that meets their needs.
- GOFCC (Growing Opportunities in Family Child Care) has helped launch seven new family child care programs in Prince George's County and four in Anne Arundel County since 2023. There are 24 more individuals (13 in Prince George's and 11 in Anne Arundel) that are committed and doing the start-up work now, and 6 more (5 in Prince George's and 1 in Anne Arundel) in an entirely Spanish-speaking cohort begin today, on March 1. We urge the General Assembly to make this pilot a permanent part of the child care infrastructure, too.
- Investment in preK grants will help with the work toward an equitable mixed delivery system in our school district and around the state.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that in Maryland, nearly 12 percent of children younger than 5 live in families that during a recent year saw someone quit, change, or refuse a job because of problems with child care, and women are much more likely than men to experience negative

employment consequences related to caregiving. Maryland's Comptroller issued a report noting as the cost of child care increases, overall female employment decreases by 5%.

The Right to Start Act is a valuable piece of the puzzle. It does not replace the need for robust investments, however. **I urge you and your colleagues to:**

- support the Governor's child care allocation,
- sustain investments in the CCS budget,
- maintain current provider reimbursement levels,
- oppose the BRFA provision that would enable the administration to impose an enrollment freeze without input from the General Assembly. We urge you to reject the BRFA language enabling the Administration to implement a freeze in Program enrollment, and
- support the Right to Start Act

Thank you for your leadership for our community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Iverson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.