



SB 500

Position: Favorable

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Feb. 14th, 2024

**Testimony: SB 500 Education-Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund-Alterations
Submitted to: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 14, 2024**

Celebree School enthusiastically supports HB 600. We thank sponsor, Senator Mary Washington for her leadership and support of the child care industry workforce, children and families.

Child care is an economic and equity imperative. SB 500 addresses economic and equity imperatives with important alterations to the existing state Child Care Career and Professional Development Program (CCCPDF) by increasing employment service hours, which helps build workforce capacity along with prioritizing and expanding opportunities for our diverse teachers whose first language is not English.

The Office of Child Care Workforce Advancement Branch advertises, recruits, and supports the child care community through the CCCPDF which pays in full for academic degrees, including two- and four-year degrees and master's level degrees, as well as books in early childhood education and related fields. Additionally, to be eligible or qualify for the CCCPDF you must be participating in the Office of Child Care Maryland Credential Program specifically designated for child care staff, at a level two or higher. However, the service commitment is only ten hours per week upon graduation from a participating college/university in a licensed child care program. The service commitment ten hours per week do not meet the needs of child care businesses who have a critical workforce shortage nor is it equitable for the significant funding invested. The CCCPDF service hours to pay back should increase to a minimum of 20 hours per week, especially when the resources used are directly related to child care.

The child care industry continues to struggle with critical workforce shortages and the recovery has lagged behind other businesses. ARPA funds have been exhausted. The child care industry has not fully recovered from the pandemic and was tenuous prior to the pandemic. According to MSDE, child care has lost over 800 programs. Additionally, numerous programs have demand for child care services, but cannot open space/classrooms due to the critical workforce shortages plaguing small business, especially the child care industry. Providers and advocates say recruiting and retaining workers is now one of their biggest challenges.

According to Indeed, the demand for child care workers remains high. In January 2021, job postings on Indeed were back to pre-pandemic levels for child care roles, and they have remained above pre-pandemic levels ever since. In fact, by September 2023, child care job postings on Indeed were still more than 50 percent above



their pre-pandemic levels. The number of job postings for child care positions is much higher, relative to pre-pandemic levels, than other pandemic-affected roles, such as retail and sales. For decades, we have undervalued and underinvested in our child care system, and now our economy—and our most vulnerable workers—are paying the price. It will take the combined efforts of the federal government, state leaders, and businesses to ensure every family has access to affordable, high-quality childcare that can move the country and its economy forward. SB 500 makes an impact by building capacity and equity in the workforce.

Maryland has led the way in creating amazing initiatives to invest in cultivating more child care providers and devoting resources to the CCCPDF each year. SB 500 expands the opportunities and prioritizes funding along with increasing service hours to build a qualified workforce in a critical workforce shortage industry. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as many as 100,000 Americans have been forced to stay home from work each month because of child care problems. The economic toll now amounts to \$122 billion each year in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue. A recent report from the Government Accountability Office found that child care obligations represent a massive hurdle for workers struggling to access job training.

Native language degree programs are available and very successful. You will receive testimony from Clackamas College in Oregon about their Early Childhood Education degree fully available in Spanish online. Clackamas is partnering with other states to provide this opportunity for ECE fully in Spanish including, New York. Also, North Seattle College and College of the Lakes in Illinois also have degreed programs fully in Spanish to meet the diverse need of this population.

SB 500 aligns with both HB 1219 Maryland Educator Shortage Reduction Act diverse dashboard efforts and with the new AIB Pillar 1 recommendations under Alleviate Barriers to Higher Education.

Celebree School urges a favorable report.