

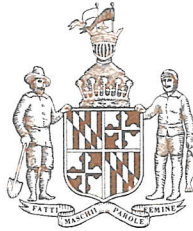
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Bill 882 – Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Permanent Establishment

February 23, 2024

Mister Chairman and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

Even prior to the pandemic, the number of Family Child Care Programs had been on the decline. These programs, which are different from Child Care Centers, are typically owned and run by women who care for up to eight children at a time in their homes. In Maryland the number of these Family Child Care programs have gone from approximately 12,500 in 1996 to 4300 in 2023. This is a trend that is mirrored nationally. There are many factors that have contributed to this decline: arduous approval processes through multiple layers of governments, lack of resources and support for their small business, and difficulties accessing professional development.

In 2015, a Montgomery County program was developed to help individuals who want to start a family child care program or need help with an existing program by providing resources not readily available or in some instances not available at all. This highly successful program has helped to create new family child care centers and opened up hundreds of new child care slots in some of the highest poverty areas in Montgomery County

In 2021 legislation was passed to take this very successful program and set up a pilot program in the State. Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) administers the pilot program in concert with the State's network of child care resource centers. The results of this program have been exceptional. In the first full year of implementation, there have been 320 participants. 101 participants have received licenses which equates to 796 new child care slots. 81 participants are currently awaiting licensing decisions and 138 participants are in the process.

Participation has taken place throughout the state with:

- 95 in Baltimore City
- 55 in Baltimore, Cecil and Harford Counties
- 63 in Western Maryland
- 62 in the Eastern Shore
- 16 in Anne Arundel County
- 29 in Prince George's County

Maryland families depend on quality child care to allow parents to keep their jobs and support their families. This legislation supports not only the parents who need care for their children, but Marylanders who are trying to open and run a small business to support their families. Increasing the availability of high-quality child care is integral to the state's economic stability and this low cost, high impact program is a way to increase and retain childcare openings in Maryland.

Senate Bill 882 will make this a highly successful program a permanent program in the Department, and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 882.