



Testimony Concerning HB 1254
“Child Care Providers - Criminal History Records Checks and
Abuse and Neglect Clearances - Requirements”
Submitted to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 27, 2024

Position: Oppose

Maryland Family Network (MFN) opposes HB 1254, which would undercut important provisions around criminal history records checks and abuse and neglect clearances for child care providers and parties associated with child care programs.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

Currently, the Maryland State Department of Education’s Office of Child Care (OCC) regional licensing staff review and process in-state and out-of-state criminal background clearances and child abuse and neglect records for child care providers. The submission and review of these records is a critical component of measures designed to safeguard children’s safety in child care programs. Without additional resources dedicated to the background check process, provisions of this bill raise significant capacity concerns for already overextended OCC staff.

Among the bill’s flaws is an apparently inadvertent decrease in the frequency of child abuse checks. While this is not our only concern, it buttresses our belief that this bill needs more deliberate consideration and further vetting. In light of issues raised by Maryland State Department of Education’s OCC in their letter of information submitted to the Ways & Means Committee, MFN requests that additional time and study be undertaken before potentially compromising a system so crucial to child safety.

MFN respectfully urges an unfavorable report on HB 1254.

