



February 13, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

**SB 500 - Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund - Alterations**  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I write to you today to urge your support for SB 500, a bill that seeks to amend the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund in a manner that aligns with the goals and values of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) and addresses the pressing needs of our Latino and immigrant communities across the state.

As representatives committed to equity and justice, we understand the power of collective action. MLU, a coalition of organizations, businesses, and individuals dedicated to supporting Latino and immigrant communities, has identified critical areas where intervention is urgently needed. From housing and food insecurity to educational access and healthcare, the challenges facing these communities are numerous and complex.

This bill, SB 500, represents a vital step towards addressing some of these challenges by expanding opportunities for individuals within our communities to access quality education and professional development in the field of early childhood education. By broadening the qualifications for the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund, we can empower more individuals to pursue careers in child care, a sector essential to the well-being of our families and communities.

Furthermore, SB 500 prioritizes applicants who have not had the opportunity to pursue traditional higher education pathways, as well as those enrolled in institutions offering native language or bilingual coursework in early childhood education. This targeted approach ensures that members of our Latino and immigrant communities, who may face additional barriers to accessing higher education, are given the support they need to enter and succeed in this critical profession.

By investing in the education and professional development of individuals committed to serving in approved child care settings, SB 500 not only strengthens the early childhood education workforce but also enhances the quality of care available to our children. Additionally, it aligns

with MLU's mission of capacity-building within our communities, ensuring that grassroots organizations and individuals have the resources and support necessary to thrive.

As we strive to build a more inclusive and equitable Maryland, it is imperative that we prioritize the needs of our Latino and immigrant communities. SB 500 represents a meaningful opportunity to do just that, and I urge you to support this important legislation for the betterment of our state as a whole. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

Maryland Latinos Unidos