



THE FAMILY CHILD CARE
Alliance
OF MARYLAND

Testimony Concerning: SB 882

Title: Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Permanent Establishment

Submitted to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Date of hearing: February 23, 2024

Position: Support

The Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland (the Alliance) was incorporated in 2019 to develop a staffed family child care (FCC) network to provide various types of technical assistance to the over four thousand FCC providers in Maryland. In 2020, in cooperation with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Alliance created the ASPIRE PreK program to grow the supply of state-funded PreK programs in eligible FCC homes. Prior to the creation of the ASPIRE program, MSDE reports that an average of one FCC provider participated in the state-funded PreK program each year.

In the fall of 2023, the ASPIRE PreK program had established fifty PreK programs in eligible FCC homes, at least one program in sixteen of the state's school districts. All fifty programs are led by a lead teacher with either a P-3 certification or they have a bachelor's degree and are pursuing certification. As of February 2024, over 220 eligible three and four-year-olds are enrolled in these programs, along with over four hundred more of various ages. Our goal is to have five hundred programs across the state by FY 2031 with space for over three thousand PreK-aged children.

All PreK teachers in ASPIRE PreK go through an intensive three-year program supported by highly qualified instructional coaches. Our program focuses on improving teaching practice, programmatic effectiveness, and creating environments consistent with high-quality PreK programs. This program is designed to mirror the three-year induction program required for new teachers in Maryland's school districts.

The goals of the ASPIRE program are:

- To increase the supply of P-3 certified teachers providing high-quality PreK instruction in FCC homes;
- To build a support network for P-3 certified teachers working in FCC homes;
- To ensure all children in FCC PreK programs, regardless of eligibility for public PreK, enter kindergarten with all the skills they need to succeed and
- To lead the effort to design and test systems to best support PreK in FCC and then make those findings available across the field.

The Alliance strongly supports SB 882. The Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program (GOFCC) has proven to be a viable program to help stem the decline in family child care (FCC) homes in Maryland. These small, overwhelming women-owned businesses are essential for two reasons. First, the vast majority of parents who pay for child care for infants and toddlers use FCC businesses. Second, the ASPIRE PreK program has demonstrated that with the appropriate support program, eligible FCC business owners can offer high-quality PreK instruction, thereby helping to create the spaces needed to meet the PreK targets of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The Alliance also supports SB 882 because the GOFCC program serves as a feeder network into our newly created ASPIRE Apprenticeship program. Our apprenticeship program is the only FCC-specific apprenticeship program registered with Maryland's Department of Labor and one of the few such programs in the nation. The ASPIRE Apprenticeship is designed to give real-world experience and training to those individuals working to open their own FCC business. The GOFCC helps them get trained and licensed, and the apprenticeship program gives them experience.

We hope you will give your support to SB 882.