



March 27, 2024

SUPPORT – HB1254 - Child Care Providers - Criminal History Records Checks and Abuse and Neglect Clearances - Requirements

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Anne Arundel Early Childhood Coalition, I am writing in support of HB1254 to support an office within the Maryland State Department of Education to be dedicated to processing criminal background checks. The Early Childhood Childcare Taskforce is a group of stakeholders who work within the early childhood education field including government agencies, childcare providers, and nonprofits. Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman signed the executive order in February 2024 to create the taskforce, showing Anne Arundel's commitment to solving issues related to the childcare industry. Having a dedicated unit with MSDE for background checks will provide a mainstream process.

HB1254 will create a dedicated unit with MSDE to review background checks, but will also ensure the decisions are created in a timely manner. This bill will hold MSDE accountable to notify applicants within 10 days of receipt of application materials and within 45 days of the decision. Providers have expressed concerns in regards to how long they have waited for responses on background check submissions, and this bill will potentially alleviate these issues. The early childhood field is experiencing a crisis when it comes to recruiting staff, and addressing background check wait time will get people hired more quickly to fill open positions with childcare providers. Children's safety will still be prioritized, and allow them to access the early childcare they deserve.

We urge you to support HB1254, Child Care Providers - Criminal History Records Checks and Abuse and Neglect Clearances - Requirements to create a more streamlined process for background checks for early childhood professionals, which will then better serve our youngest children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P M Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Pamela M. Brown, PhD
Chair