

Good afternoon chair and vice chair,

My name is Molly McGriff. I am the Sr Director of United for Childcare with the United Way of Central Maryland. I'm here today in support of **House Bill 1254**.

I have worked in childcare licensing in New York and Maryland. I have seen first-hand the policies and procedures I will be discussing today.

House Bill 1254 strengthens protections for children at no cost. All existing childcare background checks will remain, but they will be done more efficiently, so that people can start working faster.

Childcare is essential to our economy. In "Counting our Losses", Maryland Family Network estimates childcare disruptions cost Maryland employers 2.41 billion dollars and reduced the state's economic output by 1.28 billion dollars in 2016 alone.

HB 1254 aims to address one key piece of the childcare staffing crisis. Workers in licensed childcare programs cannot begin work until the program is notified by MSDE's Office of Childcare that the individual has passed comprehensive background checks. The background checks are numerous and complex, comprising 6-9 or more different background checks. Delays in background check results keep staff out of classrooms, which cannot operate without meeting strict adult to child ratios.

HB 1254 will require Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Childcare to create a dedicated team to process childcare background checks, freeing up the remaining licensing specialists to complete their other duties. The dedicated team will be more efficient and will create consistency between jurisdictions. When I was a licensing specialist, I spent about 70% of every day working on processing staff moving between programs. When I talk to licensing specialists, they are very excited about this idea. It's truly what's needed. No special staff need to be hired, simply rearrange the job duties of the 100 licensing specialists on staff at Office of Childcare.

HB 1254 will also require clear and timely communication from Office of Childcare. Child care programs will have clarity on whether staff are approved to start work and applicants will know if their paperwork is incomplete complete within 10 days.

We have worked hard to ensure this bill, with its amendments, meets the needs of those impacted. I ask that you support the passing of HB 1254 so we can ease the staffing crisis in childcare and get people to work. Thank you.