



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 5000 members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony: SB Safe Sleep for Infants-Awareness and Certification Submitted to: Finance Committee February 8, 2024

Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) appreciates the efforts of SB 59 to focus on Safe Sleep practices and above all work to ensure the safety of infants. MSCCA supports SB 59 **with amendments**.

We enthusiastically support the Maryland Department of Health development of a public awareness campaign to promote education regarding safe sleep for infants. We request an amendment to add the Maryland State Department of Education as a consulting party in the development of the public awareness campaign because they have already developed materials on safe sleep for infants. We suggest the following amendment:

On page 2, in line 15, after “DEPARTMENT” insert “**IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION’S OFFICE OF CHILD CARE**”.

MSCCA **does not support** the requirement of certification in Maryland Safe Sleep Program for child care centers, as this effort is duplicative. Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care COMAR regulations include safe sleep practices, which aligns with and exceeds the Maryland Safe Sleep Certification Program. As such we recommend the following amendments:

On page 3, in line 27, after “PROGRAM” insert “**OR AN EQUIVALENCY DETERMINED BY THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**”.

On page 3, strike in their entirety lines 28 through 30, inclusive, and substitute “**(2) ALL LICENSED AND REGISTERED CHILD CARE PROGRAMS SHALL RECEIVE AND DISTRIBUTE PUBLIC AWARENESS MATERIALS DEVELOPED BY THE DEPARTMENT RELATED TO MARYLAND SAFE SLEEP TO DISSEMINATE ANNUALLY AS A RESOURCE TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS**”.

MSCCA also suggests amendments to strike all language related to fines and civil citations for violations. Child care businesses may be deterred from enrolling infants due to duplicative requirements from two different state agencies and hefty fines for primarily small many struggling women owned and operated businesses. Maryland lacks sufficient slots for infant/toddlers for working parents and these mandates and threats of civil citations will negatively impact access to already limited licensed child care options. The suggested amendment is as follows:

On page 4, in line 5, strike “, [or] (e), **OR (G)**” and insert “**OR (E)**”.

Additionally, we recommend amending the compliance and evaluation of programs for certification to an equivalency determined by licensing authority, MSDE.

First and foremost, the sponsor and MSCCA’s collective priorities and goals are the safety and well-being of children. SB 59, with proposed amendments will further these goals by developing of important safe sleep campaign materials, supporting additional partnership opportunities with state agencies to expand awareness, recommending alignment and recognizing equivalencies of safe sleep best practices with current child care COMAR regulations to avoid duplicity.

MSCCA recommends a favorable committee report **with the aforementioned amendments.**