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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 1254 – Child Care Providers – Criminal History Records Checks and Abuse and Neglect Clearances – Requirements

Ways and Means Committee

February 28, 2024

Support with Amendments

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Adat Chaim Congregation
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 Baltimore Men's ORT
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 Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation
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 Jewish Labor Committee
 Jewish War Veterans
 Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
 Jewish Women International
 Jews For Judaism
 Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah Hebrew Congregation
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 Rabbinical Council of America
 Religious Zionists of America
 Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
 Shomrei Emunah Congregation
 Suburban Orthodox Congregation
 Temple Beth Shalom
 Temple Isaiah
 Zionist Organization of America
 Baltimore District

The Baltimore Jewish Council Represents the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish community of Greater Baltimore. The Associated's Jewish Community Center's (JCC'S) operate Early Childhood Learning Centers (ECLC) and there are several other Jewish ECLC's and other childcare centers in our area. We understand the positive intent of this bill, but we are concerned about the real-life negative effects it could have on running childcare centers in Maryland.

Currently it is standard practice that larger ECLC's independently fingerprint and run that information through CJIS, generally receiving those results in 24-48 hours, enabling them to hire staff while they wait for Department of Human Service's (Department) clearance. However, we understand that due to a change in Federal law, private entities will no longer have access to FBI CJIS results which are needed in order to approve a job application for a childcare instructor.

HB1254 gives up to 45 days for the Department to let childcare centers know whether a person is eligible for employment and 10 days for an applicant to know the status of their application. This is language taken from the Federal requirements. We understand that currently the Department does not always get that information to ECLC's and other childcare centers within that timeframe, which is the reason for this bill. However, 45 days would mean ECLC's having to shut down classrooms, leaving both the ECLC's and parents in a bind if there is a staff turnover. During a time when over 700 childcare centers closed during covid in Maryland, where we have childcare staffing crisis, 45 days is far too many.

A similar bill (SB708 2023) was introduced and passed last year around camp counselors.¹ We were able to work with the Department of Health and amend the bill to require a 3-business day turn-around period to notify the entity if a staffer was approved and passed their background check.

We ask that HB1254 be similarly amended, with the understanding that childcare centers require more background checks. We ask that the Department amend the 10-day status notice to 5-business days and the 45-day clearance notification to 7-business days. While this would still be burdensome, it is more reasonable and

¹ https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/chapters_noln/Ch_226_sb0708T.pdf

would be less detrimental to childcare centers and families that rely on them throughout the state.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report with the above amendments on HB1254.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.