

Hearing Testimony March 6, 2024
House Ways and Means Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500

HB1403

Family Child Care Homes and Large Family Child Care Homes - Age of Children in Care - Alterations
SUPPORT

SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty and Staff at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. SEIU supports HB1403, as amended, and we thank the sponsor and SEIU Local 500 member Delegate McCaskill for her unwavering leadership and support of the child care community, advocating for the welfare of children and families.

HB 1403 would adjust the age threshold of an infant to 18 months and restrict the number of children under 18 months to two, with an additional limit of two children aged 18-24 months, without necessitating extra staff.

Recognizing the vital role of family child care programs in both the workforce and local communities, this legislation acknowledges the pressing need for infant and toddler slots, which are often in short supply. Safety remains paramount in child care, and HB 1403 aims to expand child care options within safe limits, prioritizing the safety and quality of care and education for our youngest Marylanders.

The child care sector continues to face challenges, exacerbated by the pandemic's impact. According to MSDE, over 800 child care programs/providers have been lost, and the escalating costs of child care, coupled with inflation, have contributed to a decline in female employment, as noted in a recent report from the Comptroller's office, with about 160,000 women exiting the workforce due primarily to child care and transportation obstacles. The top reason why so many Marylanders did not return to work after the pandemic when their businesses or employers reopened was they could not find affordable, reliable, quality child care. Maryland needs to take proactive steps, or the child care work force will continue to decline and parents will be left with even fewer options for child care.

Child care is the workforce behind Maryland's workforce. HB 1403 introduces impactful changes that support the expansion of age-related slots, without altering crucial staff-to-child ratios.

SEIU Local 500 requests a favorable report.