

FAVORABLE

Testimony - HB1403 Family Child Care Homes and Large Family Child Care Homes - Age of Children in Care - Alterations

Fatmata Binta Klemm

I would like to offer my testimony in support of HB1403.

As any parent in Maryland knows, there just aren't very many infant spots available. The stress and expense of having to secure a rare infant spot opening is an unpleasant part of what should be a joyous time.

Reducing the age of what's considered an infant from 2 years to 15 months would be a common sense and needed change that would increase the availability and decrease the cost of childcare for parents. It would also be a lifeline for family childcare providers like myself who have struggled with the burden that misclassifying older children as infants has imposed.

The current regulations unnecessarily restrict the availability of infant spots, and to make the math work and to stay afloat, providers like me have to charge as much as possible for children under 2 years old. This does a disservice to the families in my care and to those families that would like to join my daycare but cannot afford it.

Children at all levels require different levels of supervision and care. A 6-week old has entirely different needs than a 23 month old, and it doesn't make sense to consider them the same. The current regulations are even confusing to parents who cannot conceive of how a 23-month-old who can hold a conversation, has been walking for a year, and is nearly ready for potty training is considered an infant and not a toddler. It just doesn't make sense.

There should remain reasonable limits on caregiver-to-child ratios for infants, and changing the classification of infants to children under 15 months is a reasonable compromise that can guarantee the safety of children while giving some respite to parents and caregivers.

I fully support Del. McCaskill's bill and thank her for taking the initiative to correct what has been a glaring issue for providers for years. Thank you for your consideration.

Fatmata Binta Klemm
Director, Bonjour Babies Daycare
Silver Spring, 20901