

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. 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 and does not cost a thing. All existing childcare pre-employment background checks will be done. They will simply be done more efficiently, so that people can start working faster. And no special staff need to be hired, simply rearrange the job duties of the 100 licensing specialists on staff at Office of Childcare.

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 must undergo comprehensive background checks prior to beginning work. The background checks are numerous and complex.

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.

HB 1254 will also require clear and timely communication from Office of Childcare to applicants about their status and eligibility to work. So people know exactly where they are in the process, enabling them to act if something is needed from them, and clarifying their work eligibility.

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.