

March 18, 2024

**Testimony in Support of HB 600/SB 500
Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund - Alterations
Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee**

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Child Resource Connect (CRC), formerly Prince George's Child Resource Center, helps create healthy and nurturing environments for children by supporting their families and educating their caregivers. Through a comprehensive array of programming—direct services for children and families, education and coaching for child care providers, and grassroots advocacy in partnership with stakeholders at all levels—we work towards communities in which all families have access to high-quality child care and the resources and support they need to build stable, secure environments in which children can thrive.

Thank you for supporting **HB 600/SB 500 Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund – Alterations**. Passage of this legislation will open much-needed opportunities for early childhood educators and the families counting on us. This bill calls for:

- updating the qualifications for an award from the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund to include a service obligation to work in an approved child care setting for at least 20 hours per week;
- requiring the Office of Child Care at MSDE to prioritize grant awards to applicants who have not completed any college courses for credit;
- allowing an applicant to have attended or be accepted to an accredited college or university outside of Maryland and here is why that is especially important: there are schools from coast to coast *but not in Maryland* that offer native language or bilingual coursework in early childhood education or a related field. Ensuring Maryland's educators can access education in their most confident language is a big step forward for equity, language justice, ensuring meaningful experiences for early childhood educators and families.

Children experience healthy child development that is crucial for success in school and in life, in family child care, centers, and school-based early childhood programs. Knowing this, the Kirwan Commission and the "Blueprint" legislation stood strong on a mixed delivery approach to delivering preK. That means having preK available in schools AND in child care centers and family child care.

Mixed delivery implementation has been challenging for school districts for a variety of reasons. Together we are working through those barriers and identifying solutions. This bill is one of the important pieces of that work: ensuring meaningful teacher preparation while we value the strengths and competencies of the existing workforce.

Child care provider leaders have been championing this bill and we are proud to stand beside them. Thank you for supporting this bill and standing beside the community, too.