

JARED SOLOMON
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County

DEPUTY SPEAKER PRO TEM

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Oversight Committee
on Personnel

Capital Budget

House Chair, Joint Audit and
Evaluation Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 312
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3130 · 410-841-3130
800-492-7122 Ext. 3130
Fax 301-858-3053 · 410-841-3053
Jared.Solomon@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 1139 Testimony – Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program –
Permanent Establishment
February 21, 2024**

House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present on my bill HB1139 to help address acute shortages of family child care programs in underserved communities in our state.

I'm both pleased and proud to bring this bill to you today for your consideration. Our state and our nation depend on child care to keep parents earning, children learning, and our economy churning. To achieve these essential goals, child care programs must be accessible, affordable, and of high quality.

These three factors are intertwined, but access is arguably the most fundamental need. Access to child care is threatened when the supply of affordable, high quality programs is diminished or inequitably distributed.

With that in mind, Senator King and I brought the precursor to this bill to the Committee in 2021. It was intended to pilot and expand the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities (GoFCC), which started in Montgomery County, to increase the availability of quality family child care programs for struggling families. I'm delighted to say that you passed that bill unanimously and it has been a smashing success.

Licensed family child care (FCC) programs, as distinct from child care centers, are most often operated by women who care for up to eight children in their home. Family child care centers constitute a critical component of the overall supply of child care and a necessary or preferable option for many parents due to cost, geographic proximity, hours of availability, and cultural or linguistic concerns. And yet, the number of FCC programs in Maryland has declined precipitously over the past two decades—from approximately 12,500 in 1996 to 4300 in 2023—a trend that's mirrored nationally.

The legislation you passed in 2021 created a three region pilot program, based on a very promising effort in Montgomery County, to increase the supply of FCC programs and ensure the sustainability of new and existing ones. The GoFCC program does this by:

- Conducting outreach through multi-lingual means;
- Recruiting individuals who seek to become licensed FCC providers;
- Supporting those individuals as they navigate the regulatory process through training, technical assistance, and financial incentives;
- Helping retain newly registered and existing FCC providers through technical assistance to achieve quality benchmarks, peer-to-peer mentoring, and financial incentives; and
- Working with State and local partners, such as chambers of commerce and organizations that support small businesses and women- and minority-owned businesses, to provide further assistance to FCC programs in implementing best business practices and achieving financial sustainability.

But the big news is that we have outcomes and results to share with you today, and they're impressive. **In just two years of implementation, the program has helped to created nearly 100 new family child care centers and nearly 800 new child care slots!**

This is one of the ways good public policy is supposed to work: we find a promising idea, we pilot it, we collect and evaluate results, and when the results warrant, we build on that success. And that's what this year's HB 1139—the bill that's before you today—will do. It will take the time-limited and low-cost pilot program you created in 2021 and make it permanent. With this additional small appropriation, we can realize an incredible return on our investment.

I'll be happy to answer any questions you have and I respectfully request your favorable consideration on this bill.