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**TO:** House Ways and Means Committee

**BILL:** House Bill (HB) 1139 – Education – Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Permanent Establishment

**DATE:** February 21, 2024

**POSITION:** Support

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The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would like to express support for House Bill (HB) 1139 – Education - Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Permanent Establishment.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the reduction of licensed and registered child care programs in the State of Maryland and across the country. Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC) is a unique program, started in Montgomery County, which provides intense and targeted training, coaching, and resources to support interested individuals in opening a family child care business. The goal of the Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care program is to increase the supply and ensure the sustainability of family child care providers in areas with above-average rates of poverty and unemployment. GOFCC guides potential providers through the licensing and registration process while supporting them in building a strong business foundation and high-quality child care program. Participation is free and includes all the required training, provides access to knowledgeable coaches, and shares a variety of resources which will support the opening of a child care business.

Maryland Family Network (MFN), as the State Coordinating Entity of the Maryland Child Care Resource Network (MCCRN), provides grant management, oversight, and leadership of the GOFCC project at the direction of MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood. MFN developed and released the request for proposals and selected three agencies (Child Resource Connect in Central MD South counties, Abilities Network in Central MD North Counties, and The Family Tree in Baltimore City) to receive funding under this grant.

The Division of Early Childhood provides grant monitoring support for the GOFCC program, including technical assistance, monthly meetings for updates and progress, budget monitoring, processing invoices, and monitoring quarterly reports. The Division of Early Childhood used \$450,000 in state general funds for FY23 and FY24 to fund the GOFCC program, distributing \$150,000 each to three agencies and supporting two additional agencies with federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

There has been tremendous progress since the inception of the pilot. GOFCC achieved promising outcomes from January 2023 to January 2024, with 88 programs licensed or registered (36 pending), 62 new programs enrolled in MD EXCELS, with three reaching Level 3, along with 58 programs set up to accept Child Care Scholarship program participants. GOFCC has expanded and is available in Allegany, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Caroline County, Carroll County, Cecil County, Dorchester County, Frederick County, Garrett County, Harford County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Washington County, and Wicomico County. Additional funding will provide opportunities for other Child Care Resource Centers and nonprofits to form GOFCC cohorts.

The State Board and MSDE respectfully request that the committee consider this information on **HB 1139**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at [Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov](mailto:Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov) or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.