

Hearing Testimony March 20, 2024
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500

SB500

Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund – Alterations

SUPPORT

SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty and Staff at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. We urge a FAVORABLE Report on SB500 – Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund Alterations. We would also like to thank Senator Washington for her many years as an advocate for the child care community.

In the last few years there's been a precipitous drop in the number of child care providers. In 2010, based on the information provided to us by the state, there were approximately 8,000 licensed family child care providers. Today, there are only 3,900 and of those, only about 1,200. The impact of COVID-19 was felt acutely by parents, children and providers in our child care system. The top reason why so many Marylanders did not return to work when their businesses or employers reopened was, they could not find affordable, reliable, quality child care. Maryland needs to take proactive steps, or the child care work force will continue to decline and parents will be left with even fewer options for child care.

The Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) provides essential support to the child care community through funding full academic degrees, including two- and four-year programs and master's level. It also provides funding for books in early childhood education and related fields. To qualify for the fund, an individual must be participating in the Office of Child Care Maryland Credential Program specifically for child care staff, at a level two or higher, with a service commitment of ten hours per week upon graduation for institutes of higher education in a licensed child care program.

SB500 makes critical changes to the program to meet the needs of child care providers and businesses. These changes include increasing the service hours required to 20 hours a week and by prioritizing awards to applicants who have not completed any college courses for credit and those who have been accepted by a college or university that offers native language or bilingual courses in early childhood education or related fields.

Child care businesses are facing critical workforce shortage supply. Our state needs to encourage more diverse and equitable candidates to join the child care profession, and we believe that SB500 addresses these issues by helping to build a qualified and diverse child care workforce. We urge a favorable report.