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Co-provider

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Greetings Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and committee. My name is Fatima Whitmore, and I am a Childcare Co-provider in Baltimore County. Many child care challenges will vary by state, and Maryland is no exception. Child care for working families is getting harder and harder to find, especially for infants and toddlers of low-income parents. Many Parents find it hard to comply to the schedules of school and work without affordable, available, and quality child care. Workforce development programs' schedules and trainings do not accommodate parents of infants and toddlers, leaving parents little room to adjust training hours to correspond with child care hours. This rings true even more when family has two children under the age of 2 years old.

For this reason, I support HB1403, this bill will allow the age of an infant to be 18 months and under instead of 2 years old and under. This change will allow family child care providers to fill more infant and toddler slots. I do not foresee this change interfering with the current safety regulations in COMAR. This change would give private providers an opportunity to keep more families together, while opening more slots in our communities. HB1403 will allow providers to adjust the care for infant and toddlers, at their discretion and expand child care accessibility for more families.

It is crucial for the State to build pathways for high-quality infant/toddler services across mixed delivery systems. This adjustment in an infant's age will address a few, but not all the state's plan for infant and toddler care. HB1403 will also, transition more infants and toddlers to licensed child care, and will support family child care providers the leverage needed to help more families navigate licensed child care. The lack of infant and toddler care causes economic and job instability for many families. This bill could provide some relief for those families experiencing economic instability.

There is no need to tell a story about what happens, when a family can't find reliable, affordable child care. Child-care shortages have made it particularly challenging for women; however, this bill will boost infant/toddlers slots. I am grateful for this opportunity to support HB1403. I humbly ask this committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Fatima Whitmore