



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 868**

### **Substitute Child Care Provider Pool Pilot Program – Established**

TO: Hon. Brian Feldman, Chair, and Members of the EEE Committee

FROM: Zachary Alberts, Director of Advocacy

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF), a West Baltimore workforce and family-strengthening community-based organization, advocates for legislative initiatives that strengthen urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success.

We are pleased to support Senator Henson's SB 868, the purpose of which is to facilitate the continuous operation of childcare facilities in the State by ensuring that qualified substitute childcare providers are available to fill the short-term staffing needs of childcare facilities. During CFUF's monthly workforce development classes, we host focus groups to understand the structural barriers that the low-income, unemployed or underemployed members we serve face to workforce participation. Without fail, childcare is one of the top three issues cited each month.

CFUF members report that childcare is not only expensive but is also often unreliable. This is usually not due to any fault of the childcare provider, but instead a natural consequence of employing individuals who get sick, who take vacation, and who need professional development opportunities. When providers are understaffed, families' access is limited or altogether unavailable. The issue is compounded by the fact that when childcare is suddenly unavailable, older siblings' school attendance is often impacted as they are kept home to provide childcare. Consequently, employed parents must miss work or rely on limited favors from their family and friends. When parents work low-income jobs, their employers are rarely understanding of absences or lateness due to childcare challenges and termination can quickly follow.

Because this bill would not only advance the interests of individual families, but also expand Maryland's tax base, we urge a favorable report.

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