



## **Testimony of Senate Bill 857**

Child Care – Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup

March 5, 2025

### **Position: Favorable**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

My name is Ruby Daniels, and I am honored to serve as the **President of the Maryland State Family Child Care Association**, representing thousands of family child care providers across the state. I have been a family child care provider for over 30 years and am currently in my second year as an **Independent Pre-K Expansion grantee**. Additionally, I serve as the **Chair of the Pillar 1 Advisory Committee to the AIB**, working to ensure equitable access to early childhood education in Maryland.

The **Prekindergarten Expansion Grant** is a vital opportunity for independent providers to offer high-quality early childhood education. However, the grant application process presents significant challenges, particularly for family child care providers and smaller programs. The application has an extremely short timeline for submission. This puts an undue burden on providers who must quickly gather extensive documentation while continuing to run their programs. Establishing a multiyear award process, as proposed in Senate Bill 857, would offer much-needed predictability and financial stability, allowing providers to focus on delivering quality education rather than reapplying for funding each year.

Another major barrier is **the grant invoicing process**. For independent family child care providers, navigating the complex reimbursement system can be overwhelming. Unlike larger institutions with dedicated administrative staff, family child care providers must balance teaching, compliance, and financial management on their own. Streamlining this process and ensuring 100% grant funding is provided by July 1, 2025, as outlined in this bill, will ease cash flow issues, and allow providers to operate effectively without delays in funding.

Senate Bill 857 also ensures that Pre-K Expansion Grants do not reduce the availability of child care slots for infants and toddlers. This is crucial, as Maryland is already facing **a shortage of infant and toddler care**. Protecting these slots while expanding prekindergarten services will help create a balanced and sustainable early education system.

Furthermore, the bill's provision for **technical assistance** especially for family child care providers and multilingual applicants like myself is a critical step forward. Many dedicated providers have the skills and passion to participate in the Pre-K Expansion but struggle with navigating the grant system. By offering clearer guidance, multilingual resources, and direct technical support, we can increase participation from diverse providers, ensuring all families have access to high-quality prekindergarten options.



**Maryland State  
Family Child Care  
Association**  
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For these reasons, I strongly support Senate Bill 857 and urge the committee to approve this legislation. The proposed changes will make the Pre-K Expansion Grant more accessible, sustainable, and effective, allowing Maryland to continue building a strong foundation for our youngest learners.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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