

February 12, 2025

Favorable Testimony

SB0452

Child Care Affordability Commission- Establishment

I am Hilary Roberts-King the executive Director of the nonprofit Downtown Baltimore Child Care a nonprofit organization which has been providing child care in Baltimore city for 40 years. I stand before you today in strong support of establishing the *Child Care Affordability Commission*.

Child care is not just a family issue—it is an economic and workforce issue as Brooke Lierman’s recent brief *Child Care and the Economy* details. All families in Maryland, no matter their economic status can face significant barriers when trying to access high-quality, affordable child care for their babies and toddlers.

Caring for infants is expensive no matter whether you are paying for care in your home, out of the home, or absorbing the opportunity cost of keeping a parent out of the workforce. High-quality educational care from qualified professionals costs even more.

For example, at one of Downtown Baltimore Child Care’s state-accredited centers, infant care averages \$28,000 annually. Over 80% of that tuition is absorbed by wages and benefits for our teachers, leaving the rest for the center’s insurance, food, materials, and building expenses. Child care teachers are educated and work long hours doing important work. They deserve a wage comparable to their education and experience, but sadly many Maryland providers struggle to offer a living wage based on revenue that comes from solely on tuition.

I am sure you can also imagine that after a family pays their monthly child care bill, they too do not always have sufficient funds to pay for housing, healthcare, and food.

We have a choice as Marylanders, we can strategically address the issue that young families are at best stretched to find affordable care for young children and at worst priced out of care. Or we can maintain the current status quo, where frequently a parent cannot find care or afford to go to work.

Identifying new and reliable revenue streams to support families with young children and the educated workforce who cares for children is critical. If we are serious about building a child care system that works for all Maryland families, we must invest in long-term solutions.

I urge you to support this commission so that we can take meaningful action to address the child care crisis in our state. Our children, our families, and our economy depend on it.