



Testimony - HB 859, Access to Health Insurance for Child Care Professionals –
Outreach and Qualifying Nonprofit Satellite Organizations
Favorable

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 20, 2025

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Honorable Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk & Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents over 23,000 workers across Maryland including family child care providers. Our members have a role in the lives of Marylanders from cradle to career. We wish to express our strong support for Maryland House Bill 859, which takes a crucial step toward improving access to health insurance for child care professionals across Maryland.

Child care providers play a vital role in our communities, nurturing and educating our youngest learners while enabling parents to participate in the workforce. Yet, despite their essential contributions, many child care professionals struggle to access affordable health insurance. HB 859 addresses this disparity by:

- Enhancing Outreach and Support – The bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education, in collaboration with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, to actively promote health insurance access for child care professionals. This outreach will connect providers with affordable coverage options through Medicaid and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, ensuring they do not fall through the cracks of the system.
- Expanding Eligibility for Health Benefits – By allowing child care providers that receive substantial government funding to participate in the State Employee and Retiree Health and Welfare Benefits Program as satellite organizations, HB 859

grants these professionals access to more stable and comprehensive health coverage options.

- Strengthening the Child Care Workforce – Providing affordable health insurance is not just a moral imperative—it is also an economic necessity. The child care industry is facing a workforce crisis, with many providers leaving the profession due to financial insecurity. Access to health insurance will help attract and retain qualified professionals, ensuring Maryland families have access to high-quality child care.

By passing HB 859, Maryland will take a significant step toward recognizing and valuing the dedication of child care professionals. This legislation aligns with the state's broader efforts to strengthen early childhood education and workforce development.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 859 and thank Delegate Solomon for his leadership on this issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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