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**WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND**  
**THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

February 19, 2025

To: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee

**The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express our unanimous support for HB859: Access to Health Insurance for Child Care Professionals - Outreach and Qualifying Nonprofit Satellite Organizations.** This critical legislation is a necessary step in ensuring that child care professionals—who are overwhelmingly women—have access to affordable health insurance, recognizing the essential role they play in supporting Maryland's children and families.

As you are aware, child care providers are the backbone of our early education system, nurturing and educating our youngest learners during their most critical developmental years. Despite the invaluable work they do, many child care professionals struggle to access affordable health care, placing their well-being—and by extension, the well-being of the children they care for—at risk. By requiring the State Department of Education, in collaboration with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, to promote access to health insurance for child care professionals, HB859 helps bridge this gap. Additionally, by allowing certain child care providers to participate in the State Employee and Retiree Health and Welfare Benefits Program as a satellite organization, this bill creates a meaningful opportunity for providers to obtain comprehensive coverage at a sustainable cost.

Ensuring that child care professionals have access to health insurance is not just a workforce issue—it is a public health and economic imperative. When providers are healthy, they can continue delivering high-quality care to Maryland's children without the added burden of medical debt or the fear of going without necessary treatment. Moreover, this legislation supports the stability of the child care industry, which is crucial for working parents—particularly mothers—who rely on consistent, high-quality child care to fully participate in the workforce.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus strongly urges support for HB859. By passing this legislation, Maryland will take a significant step toward prioritizing the health and well-being of child care professionals, strengthening early childhood education, and ensuring a more equitable and sustainable future for women and children across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your continued dedication to improving the lives of Marylanders.