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My name is Randi Albertsen. I own Innovations in Education, LLC. We provide professional development and consulting for early childhood programs. I am **vehemently opposed** to HB1374, Parental Choice for Prekindergarten Act.

If passed, this bill will cause irreparable harm to community-based childcare programs in Maryland and will negate the intent of Pillar 1 in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Pillar 1 is designed to create a 50-50 mixed delivery system to serve Maryland's most marginalized 3- and 4-year-olds. The goal of Pillar 1 is to increase access to high-quality early learning environments and enhance opportunities for school readiness for our youngest learners.

Rather than increase access to high-quality early learning environments through an equitable mixed-delivery system, this bill will decrease the availability of prekindergarten slots in community-based childcare programs. This bill removes the ability of public school systems to serve Tier-eligible 3-year-olds AND, simultaneously, limits the number of 4-year-olds whom community-based private providers can serve as counties move toward a 50-50 mixed delivery system.

If the goal of this bill is to support parental choice for prekindergarten, it will do the exact opposite. As we approach a true mixed delivery system, if more community-based programs enroll 3-year-olds in their prekindergarten programs, the number of community-based slots for eligible 4-year-olds will be proportionately decreased. This bill's net effect is placing more Tier 1 eligible 4-year-olds in public schools and far fewer 4-year-olds in community-based prekindergarten programs. With fewer community-based, 4-year-old slots available for Tier 1 families, parental choice is significantly reduced, as in some communities, their only option for prekindergarten will be a public school.

Most non-early childhood educators do not understand how community-based childcare programs operate and how their budgets function. Many of our community-based

programs are small businesses. Childcare has notoriously low operating margins, with very little room for error. Any changes to a childcare program's overall enrollment creates a ripple effect within the business and will most likely create an economic hardship. When this happens, it's parents who pay the price. That price may be an increase in tuition or a shuttering of the childcare program, leading to a lack of available care.

To ensure that Tier 1 parents truly have options and choices for prekindergarten for their 4-year-olds, we must continue to uphold an equitable mixed-delivery system that values a variety of high-quality early childhood learning environments in both public and private settings. The existing language in Pillar 1 for Tier eligibility of 3- and 4-year-olds needs to remain intact, and this bill must NOT move forward.

Please oppose this bill to preserve the true integrity of parental choice.