



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony for House Bill 862

Child Care Affordability Commission - Establishment

TO: Hon. Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: February 25, 2025

POSITION: Support

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports House Bill 862.**

House Bill 862 establishes the Child Care Affordability Commission to study and make recommendations regarding child care affordability in the State. These recommendations include; an identification of obstacles to obtaining a fiscally sustainable system of child care and early childhood education that meets the needs of children living in poverty and children at risk of living in poverty; barriers to increasing the supply of child care while offering additional supports and incentives to achieve and maintain quality; measures to ensure the success and sustainability of the Child Care Scholarship Program for working families and any additional measures to support working families, including business tax credits and other incentives for investments in child care; and revenue streams to create an adequate and sustainable source of funding for child care in the State; a determination of the economic threshold the State should use to cap the cost of child care for families in the State; and an examination of relevant issues concerning access to or the quality or affordability of child care.

As is the case in many states across the country, Maryland residents face a significant shortage of affordable child care. This shortage can be attributed to multiple factors. The first is high cost. The average cost of infant care in the state is \$14,000 per year, which is higher than the annual cost of in-state college tuition at UMD College Park. The second is a lack of supply. There is a lack of available child care providers, especially in rural areas and for families who need care during non-traditional hours (evenings or weekends). This leads to long waiting lists and difficulty accessing affordable, quality care. Third is low wages for workers. Many child care workers are paid low wages, which contributes to a high turnover rate in the industry. This low pay, combined with demanding work, makes it difficult to retain and attract qualified child care providers. This shortage of providers exacerbates the overall affordability issue, as families are forced to pay more for fewer options.

These child care affordability issues have damaged Maryland's overall economy and workforce. The lack of affordable child care options has a direct impact on parents' ability to work. Parents, particularly women, have been forced to reduce their working hours, take lower-paying jobs, or even leave the workforce entirely due to the high cost and limited availability of child care. The Child Care Affordability Commission proposed in the bill would study the current state of Maryland's Child Care industry and be able to make recommendations on how to properly address the aforementioned issues so that the legislature can propose informed, data driven solutions.

For these reasons, JOTF supports House Bill 862 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

Kam Bridges / Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org