

Testimony in Support of HB 561

Maryland Child Care Credential Program – Extension of Funding

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My name is Cindi, and I am a Maryland child care business owner. I strongly support HB561 and the extension of funding for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program.

Early childhood educators are not babysitters. They are brain architects.

From birth to age five, children experience the most rapid brain development of their lives. During this critical window, the adults guiding them shape the foundation for academic achievement, social-emotional health, and long-term success. The importance of these teachers cannot be underestimated.

The Maryland Child Care Credential Program recognizes educators who go beyond minimum licensing requirements. It incentivizes continued education, offsets training costs, and provides annual bonuses tied to professional growth. It sends a clear message: professionalism matters.

I have personally witnessed the impact of this program.

Many of my teachers received scholarship support and were able to attend their first professional early childhood conference. They experienced nationally recognized trainers, high-quality workshops, and research-based strategies they had never had access to before by using their credential training voucher and bonus. When they returned, they implemented new literacy techniques, improved classroom management strategies, and strengthened engagement with her students and had a new sense of excitement.

Professional training is expensive and we want our ECE professionals to have the highest quality training which elevates the classrooms and benefits each child they teach. Let's treat our ECE teachers as professionals.

From a business perspective, this program is also critical. Child care programs operate on limited margins. Tuition cannot simply be raised beyond what families can afford. Staffing is our largest expense. The Credential Program is one of the few tools we have to recruit and retain qualified educators and reduce costly turnover.

This workforce is primarily composed of women of color. Supporting credential attainment is both an economic development strategy and an equity commitment. Stable funding

strengthens small businesses, supports working families, and reinforces Maryland's quality infrastructure through Maryland EXCELS and Accreditation.

Maryland cannot afford to weaken a program that supports both children — and the workforce behind the workforce.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB561 to extend foundational funding beginning in FY 2028 and demonstrate Maryland's commitment to its youngest citizens and the professionals who serve them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.