Testimony Concerning HB 561
"Maryland Child Care Credential Program - Extension of Funding"
Submitted to the House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees
February 24, 2026

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports HB 561, which would extend funding for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

The surest indicators of quality in early care and education are the training and skills of the provider. Access to professional development and adequate compensation are essential workforce supports. The Maryland Child Care Credential Program was designed to support both goals. The voluntary program, which began in 2001, recognizes child care providers who go beyond the licensing requirements.

The program has experienced fits and starts in recent history due to the expiration of a Blueprint funding mandate. The FY24 budget included $5.687 million for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program, as per The Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The FY25 Allowance was zero.

Effective June 30, 2024, the Maryland State Department of Education stopped accepting applications and payments to providers ceased. The interruption led to confusion and frustration in the field. Funding in the FY26 budget has slowly brought the program back online while at the same time it continues to face an uncertain future.

Investing in the child care workforce leads to more stable high-quality care for children. The Maryland Child Care Credential Program can ensure child care providers have access to training and are recognized for quality improvements.

We urge a favorable report on HB 561.

Submitted by Beth Morrow, Director of Public Policy