



February 20, 2026

## Testimony in Support of House Bill 561 – Extend Funding for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program

**We respectfully urge the Appropriations committee to make a favorable report on HB 561.** The Maryland Child Care Credential Program is a proven workforce support for the early care and education sector. It recognizes providers and educators who exceed minimum licensing requirements by achieving higher levels of professional training and quality benchmarks within Maryland's formal workforce lattice. HB 561 ensures this program remains a meaningful incentive for quality improvement and workforce stability by extending foundational funding beginning in FY 2028.

The Maryland Child Care Credential Program works, but it requires sustained funding.

Why This Matters:

### 1. Quality Improvement Depends on Incentives

The Credential Program is codified in law (HB 1441) and embedded within Maryland EXCELS and Maryland Accreditation as a core quality indicator. However, without sustained funding, its impact is weakened.

Without stable funding:

- There is no incentive to exceed minimum licensing standards.
- Compensation tied to credential achievement becomes uncertain.
- Participation in professional development declines.
- Quality improvement efforts stall.

Suspending or destabilizing funding undermines the integrity of Maryland's quality systems at a time when families and children need stronger early learning environments.

### 2. This Is Small Business Stabilization

Child care programs are small businesses operating on extremely thin margins:

- Most operate on less than 1% profit margins.
- Staffing is the primary cost driver due to regulatory ratios.
- Tuition is largely parent-funded and capped by what families can afford.
- Child care costs exceed \$30,000 per year in Maryland.
- The average child care worker earns less than \$30,000 annually.





The Credential Program functions as a recruitment and retention tool by helping providers:

- Attract qualified staff
- Retain experienced educators
- Reward professional growth
- Reduce costly turnover

Without it, workforce instability increases and program sustainability declines.

### 3. Workforce Equity & Economic Impact

- The child care workforce is primarily composed of diverse women of color.
- Child care enables parents to participate in Maryland's workforce and economy.
- Investment in credentialing is an economic strategy and an equity commitment.

When credential funding lapses, it signals that professional growth and workforce advancement are not priorities. This erodes trust across the provider community and weakens the infrastructure Maryland has built.

Please support HB 561 to:

- Extend foundational funding for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program beginning in FY 2028
- Stabilize child care businesses
- Demonstrate Maryland's commitment to its early childhood workforce
- Strengthen and align all quality initiatives programs to enhance the Child Care Credential program/career lattice with on-going professional development for efficiency

Investing in credentialing strengthens quality, workforce stability, small business sustainability, and Maryland's economy. Maryland cannot afford to weaken a program that supports both children and the workforce behind the workforce.

The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](#) connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts all young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

Submitted on behalf of the Children's Opportunity Alliance by:

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