



Testimony - HB 561, Maryland Child Care Credential Program - Extension of Funding
Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

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Honorable Chairman Barnes & Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of working people across Maryland, including early childhood educators and family child care providers who are the backbone of our state's child care system. These professionals do the essential work of caring for and educating Maryland's youngest learners during the most critical years of brain development. Continued investment in the Maryland Child Care Credential Program is vital not only to their career advancement, but also to the healthy development of the children and families they serve.

The Maryland Child Care Credential Program provides achievement bonuses, training reimbursements, and vouchers to providers who pursue and maintain professional credentials. This structure recognizes what research and experience both tell us: higher levels of training and education in early childhood settings lead to stronger developmental outcomes for children. Credentialed providers are better equipped to support language development, early literacy, social-emotional growth, and school readiness.

Just as importantly, the program creates a meaningful career ladder for child care providers. For far too long, early childhood educators—overwhelmingly women and disproportionately women of color—have been underpaid and undervalued despite the complexity and importance of their work. The Credential Program affirms that child care is a profession. It incentivizes continued education, rewards skill-building, and supports retention in a field facing persistent workforce shortages.

House Bill 561 ensures that this progress is not temporary. By requiring ongoing appropriations at no less than the fiscal year 2024 level beginning in fiscal year 2028 and each year thereafter, the bill provides stability and predictability. That stability is critical for providers planning their professional development and for child care programs seeking to build and maintain a qualified workforce.

When we invest in credentialing, we invest in children's futures. High-quality early learning environments lay the foundation for academic success, workforce readiness, and long-term well-being. Supporting providers in advancing their credentials directly strengthens Maryland's education pipeline from its very first stage.

SEIU Local 500 urges a favorable report on House Bill 561 to ensure that Maryland continues to treat early childhood education as the essential profession it is and to sustain the professional growth of the workforce that cares for our children every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.