

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 0561.

The childcare sector faces numerous challenges, but none is more critical than staffing. With low pay, minimal benefits, and demanding working conditions, dedicated professionals leave the field not by choice, but out of necessity, forced to pursue higher paying jobs to support their families. This exodus of experienced educators undermines the stability and quality of care that Maryland's children deserve.

The Child Care Credential Program was a vital intervention designed to address this crisis. It supported our early childhood professionals through bonus pay while incentivizing professional development that makes teachers better educators and improves both the quality of care and outcomes for children. This program recognized what research consistently shows: investing in educator credentials translates directly into better experiences and stronger developmental foundations for young learners.

In June 2024, the program abruptly disappeared due to a budgeting oversight at MSDE. The loss was sudden and devastating to providers and educators who had come to rely on this support. Countless professionals who were pursuing credentials or counting on bonus payments were left in limbo. We cannot allow such instability to happen again.

I urge you to support HB 0561. The Child Care Credential Program is a proven workforce support that strengthens our early childhood education system. We cannot afford to lose it again, and we must ensure legislative protections so that it remains a stable pillar of support for Maryland's childcare professionals.

Respectfully,

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