



SB 503 — Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program – Funding

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Hearing Date: February 18, 2026

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The Family Tree we are pleased to submit supportive testimony for SB503 as Maryland’s leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect in Baltimore City and across the state.

The Family Tree strongly supports SB 503, the resources made available through this legislation makes a critical investment in expanding quality childcare options for Maryland families. This matters to families and our communities as childcare is a cornerstone of family stability.

Reliable, quality early care by:

- Enables parents—especially working mothers and caregivers—to participate in the workforce without fear of losing stable care for their children.
- Supports healthy early childhood development, including socialization, early learning, and school readiness.
- Reduces stress on families, which is a known protective factor against child abuse and neglect.

For families served by The Family Tree, access to affordable, quality childcare is not a luxury—it is an essential component of economic security and healthy development. When parents are supported with dependable care options, children thrive, and families have the space to build resilience and stability.

The Family Tree’s mission is to **strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect** through evidence-based programs, home visiting, education, and support services. We see firsthand how the availability—or lack—of quality childcare affects a family’s ability to maintain employment, secure income, access community resources, and reduce stress. SB 503’s funding for the Family Child Care Opportunities Program aligns directly with these goals by expanding the infrastructure that helps families stay strong and children stay safe.

In 2025, The Family Tree continued to be a major provider of family-strengthening supports in Maryland:

- Through a comprehensive suite of research-based programs and services, The Family Tree reaches more than 21,000 individuals annually, including parents, children, and professionals across the state.
- The agency's Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center supported the launch of 60 new licensed family childcare programs in Baltimore City, adding 410 additional child care slots in neighborhoods where access was previously limited.
- These childcare expansions and direct services complement robust prevention work including parenting education, home visiting, professional trainings, and community outreach — all of which help parents build confidence, reduce stress, and strengthen family functioning.

These outcomes illustrate The Family Tree's **capacity to leverage strategic investments into measurable growth in childcare access and family support services**, which SB 503 would bolster through stable funding for family childcare development.

Investing in childcare is preventive public policy. By supporting SB 503's appropriation requirement, Maryland will help:

1. Expand high-quality childcare capacity for families in need.
2. Support the economic stability of working families.
3. Reduce stressors that contribute to child maltreatment.
4. Strengthen early childhood outcomes across the state.

For these reasons, **The Family Tree urges a favorable report on SB 503**. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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