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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**HB 1574 : Child Care Providers – Licensing and Registration Alterations and Workgroup
to Study Illegally Provided Child Care**

March 12, 2026

House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 1574. This legislation is a direct response to the findings of the [2025 Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability \(OPEGA\) Child Care Licensing Report](#), which identified significant operational, regulatory, and structural challenges within Maryland’s child care licensing system. The report documented inconsistent enforcement practices, prolonged processing timelines, unclear corrective action standards, delays in criminal background check processing, and regulatory barriers that disproportionately burden small and family child care providers.

These issues create problems that worsen staffing shortages and disrupt child care operations. At a time when Maryland continues to face child care workforce shortages, policies that responsibly reduce barriers to employment are critical. House Bill 1574 addresses these findings and will help to strengthen the child care sector and give providers more certainty, clarity, and consistency as they care for our children.

The OPEGA report made clear that while Maryland’s licensing framework is designed to protect children, its implementation has too often resulted in unpredictability, inefficiency, and inequitable treatment of providers. In several instances, providers faced lengthy approval delays, inconsistent interpretations of regulations between regions, duplicative compliance requirements, and extended waits for criminal background clearances that prevented staff from being onboarded in a timely manner. These systemic issues contribute to workforce instability and limit our ability to expand child care capacity statewide.

House Bill 1574 makes several targeted and necessary reforms:

- **First**, the bill standardizes licensing timelines by establishing clear deadlines for the Department to process applications, conduct inspections, and issue determinations. The OPEGA report noted that unpredictable processing times create financial strain and delay

providers' ability to serve families. By codifying timelines in statute, this bill promotes transparency and accountability.

- **Second**, the legislation clarifies corrective action procedures. The report highlighted inconsistent use of corrective action plans and enforcement tools across licensing regions. HB 1574 establishes uniform standards for notice, remediation opportunities, and proportional enforcement responses. This ensures that providers are treated consistently while maintaining strong protections for children.
- **Third**, the bill improves due process protections. Providers will receive clearer written explanations of alleged violations, defined remediation pathways, and streamlined appeal procedures. The OPEGA findings emphasized confusion and lack of clarity in enforcement communication; this bill corrects that by requiring standardized documentation and communication protocols.
- **Fourth**, HB 1574 modernizes and streamlines the criminal background check process. The OPEGA report identified delays and administrative bottlenecks in background check processing that left qualified employees unable to begin work for extended periods. This bill establishes clearer processing timelines, improves interagency coordination, authorizes conditional employment where permitted under federal law pending final clearance, and requires the Department to provide timely status updates to providers. These changes maintain rigorous safety standards while preventing unnecessary workforce disruptions.
- **Fifth**, the bill reduces duplicative and outdated regulatory requirements that do not directly correlate with child safety or developmental quality. The report identified several administrative burdens that divert provider resources away from classrooms and toward paperwork. This legislation directs the Department to align regulations with evidence-based standards and eliminate redundancies.
- **Sixth**, the bill strengthens oversight consistency by requiring regular training for licensing staff and the publication of guidance documents to ensure uniform interpretation of regulations across jurisdictions. One of the most concerning findings in the OPEGA report was regional variation in enforcement. This bill ensures that a provider in Western Maryland is treated the same as a provider on the Eastern Shore or in Baltimore City.

Importantly, House Bill 1574 does not weaken child safety standards. Rather, it strengthens the integrity of the system by making it more predictable, fair, and transparent. Streamlining background checks does not mean lowering standards—it means ensuring that qualified

individuals can enter the workforce without unnecessary delay while maintaining thorough review. When enforcement is inconsistent or overly burdensome, it drives providers out of the field. At a time when Maryland continues to face child care shortages, we cannot afford a regulatory structure that unintentionally shrinks capacity.

This legislation reflects extensive stakeholder engagement, including providers, advocates, licensing professionals, and families. It balances accountability with practicality and ensures that our licensing system works as intended—to protect children while supporting a stable, sustainable child care sector.

Maryland's families depend on a child care system that is safe, accessible, and reliable. The OPEGA report identified where our licensing framework falls short. House Bill 1574 provides the statutory fixes necessary to restore confidence, fairness, efficiency, and workforce stability to that system.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 1574.