



March 23, 2026

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 359 – Child Care Facilities - Criminal History Records Check – Requirement

We respectfully urge the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 359. Ensuring the safety and well-being of children in child care settings is foundational to a strong early care and education system.

Maryland already recognizes the importance of background checks in protecting children. Current policy requires comprehensive background checks for individuals working in child care settings, including periodic rechecks to maintain safety standards.

Strengthening and clarifying these requirements is essential to maintaining trust in the child care system. Families rely on child care providers not only for early learning, but for the safety and protection of their children. Clear, consistent, and comprehensive background check policies:

- Protect children from harm
- Strengthen accountability across providers
- Ensure consistency across child care settings
- Build trust among families seeking care

At the same time, policy changes must be implemented in ways that are efficient, timely, and do not unintentionally create barriers for providers entering or remaining in the workforce. A strong child care system depends on both safety and accessibility. SB 359 supports that balance by reinforcing child protection standards while maintaining a clear framework for providers.

As Montgomery County's locally legislated coordinating entity, we regularly engage in community conversation with educators and child care providers. Since our creation, educators and administrators have brought up their frustration with the background check process required by the Maryland State Department of Education. They have reported long processing and response times, disparity in treatment by different licensing specialists, and general experience of errors. These experiences have caused delays in the start dates of new hires and the inability to use substitute teachers when needed – both of which have negative impacts on the already overburdened and under supported early care and education workforce.

Proposals in SB359, including the creation of a centralized unit for processing and management, will streamline and improve the process and experience. At a point in time where the child care industry is in crisis, we need to do everything we can to support child care educators and providers.

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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.