



Testimony - HB 1574,
Child Care Providers - Licensing and Registration Alterations and Workgroup to Study
Illegally Provided Child Care
Favorable
House Ways & Means Committee
March 12, 2026
Elly Colmers Cowan on behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Wilkins & Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of workers across Maryland's public and nonprofit sectors, including family child care providers who operate small businesses in their homes while delivering essential early childhood education and care to Maryland families. These providers are a critical part of the state's child care infrastructure, particularly for working families who rely on flexible hours, culturally competent care, and neighborhood-based services.

Family child care providers are deeply committed to maintaining safe, high-quality learning environments. However, they often operate small programs with limited administrative support and face a regulatory system that can sometimes be complex, inconsistent, or slow moving. HB 1574 makes several important improvements that help providers comply with regulations while maintaining high standards of care.

First, the bill introduces a reasonable warning process for new regulations, ensuring that providers are given the opportunity to understand and implement new rules before punitive enforcement occurs. For small, home-based providers who are balancing caregiving with running a business, this approach promotes compliance rather than punishment while maintaining accountability for child safety.

Second, the bill improves the criminal background check process by requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to establish a dedicated unit to manage these checks and provide timely updates to applicants. Delays in background check processing can prevent providers from hiring assistants or substitutes, which in turn limits their ability to serve families. By requiring acknowledgement within 10 days and

eligibility determinations within 30 days, HB 1574 will help providers maintain stable staffing and avoid unnecessary disruptions to care.

Third, the bill creates a structured compliance pathway for providers participating in Maryland EXCELS, the state's quality rating system. Rather than immediately reducing a program's quality rating for a correctable violation that does not pose a safety risk, the bill allows providers to work with the Department to return to compliance through an agreement and corrective action plan. This recognizes the commitment of quality-rated providers and supports continuous improvement rather than punitive downgrades.

Finally, SEIU Local 500 supports the creation of the Workgroup to Study Illegally Provided Child Care. Licensed and registered providers invest significant time and resources to meet state standards. Unlicensed operations undermine that system, create unfair competition for legitimate providers, and may expose children to unsafe environments. A thoughtful study of the scope, causes, and solutions to illegal child care will help strengthen Maryland's regulated child care sector.

Family child care providers are essential partners in supporting Maryland's working families and preparing young children for success. Policies that make compliance clearer, processes more efficient, and enforcement more equitable will help sustain this vital workforce.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1574.

Thank you for your time and consideration.