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Health Committee

Subcommittees

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Insurance

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 0659: State Board of Education - Membership - Early Childhood
Development Professional**

Ways and Means Committee

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. I'm Delegate Pam Guzzone, representing Howard County's District 13, and I am here in support of House Bill 659, which would require one of the existing thirteen members of the State Board of Education to be an early childhood development professional.

I come with hands-on experience in the challenges that early childcare professionals face. As an employee at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, I sent all 3 of my children to its on-site development center. During those years I served on the parent-led board which oversaw the executive director, approved annual budget and made policy decisions.

Subsequently, during my final years at Goddard part of my job included oversight of the Child Development Center and its executive director reported to me. While the center did get a bit of financial support from NASA Goddard, it was, for all intents and purposes, self-funded. This meant that tuition levels were dictated primarily by staff salaries and benefits and enrollment numbers – in childcare, annual tuition is essentially the budget divided by the expected number of students. This is the basic equation for virtually all child development providers, and it presents a set of unique challenges that get in the way of what matters most, providing quality childcare. It's often referred to as a trilemma, a continual effort to balance the 3-legged stool of accessibility, affordability and quality.

I share this knowledge of the business challenges because I saw firsthand how difficult it was for early education professionals to provide care that is accessible (there's a place to go, that has openings), affordable (a family can afford the tuition), and meets the quality we expect for our youngest learners (the teachers taking care of our children have appropriate credentials and can make a livable wage with benefits like health insurance). This is HARD and yet, we need high-quality childcare; it is essential not only for our kids, but also for our families and the broader workforce to thrive.

Despite the critical role early education professionals play, they remain largely unrepresented on the State Board of Education, our state's highest educational regulatory body. As implementation of

the Blueprint pillar on universal Pre-K continues, having a Board member who is knowledgeable about all aspects of providing early childhood education is critical to successfully enacting the mixed delivery model for Pre-K and the therefore overall success of the Blueprint.

Maryland has made historic commitments to advancing education; this bill will provide a needed voice for our youngest learners and the providers and businesses that nurture them. A dedicated Board member, focused on the needs of the childcare ecosystem as a whole, is a key to our success over the long haul. Thank you, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 659.