



TESTIMONY FOR SB0359 – Child Care Facilities – Criminal History Records Check – Requirement – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Henson

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0359 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to promote legislation that strengthens education, healthcare, public safety, environmental protection, and social justice—ensuring that every Marylander has access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

SB0359 directly advances that mission by improving safety, transparency, and accountability in Maryland’s child care system.

This bill requires individuals who will have direct contact with children in licensed child care facilities to undergo a criminal history records check. It also directs the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish a centralized unit to process and manage these background checks, ensuring consistency, efficiency, and timely review. Additionally, the bill updates the qualifications for probationary employment for first-time child care teachers at centers serving children ages 2 and older.

These provisions are both practical and urgently needed.

Maryland families depend on child care providers to offer safe, nurturing environments for infants, toddlers, and young children. Ensuring that all individuals working directly with children have completed a criminal history records check is a foundational safeguard—one that protects children, supports parents, and strengthens public trust in the child care system.

By centralizing background-check processing within MSDE, SB0359 reduces administrative delays, improves accuracy, and ensures child care facilities receive timely, reliable information. This is especially important for providers already facing staffing shortages and operational pressures. A streamlined, consistent process benefits both families and the workforce.

The bill also modernizes probationary employment rules to reflect the realities of today's child care environment while maintaining strong protections for children. These updates help child care centers recruit and retain qualified staff without compromising safety.

SB0359 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens public safety, supports working families, and promotes equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. By ensuring that all individuals working with children meet clear, consistent safety standards, this legislation reinforces Maryland's commitment to protecting its youngest residents.

We urge the Committee to support this thoughtful, necessary, and community-centered legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0359.**