

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 1574.

I am a childcare systems subject matter expert with more than 16 years of experience, including work in childcare licensing in New York and Maryland. I now serve as the Senior Director of United for Childcare at the United Way of Central Maryland.

Maryland needs a right-sized approach to regulating childcare. Our system must ensure child safety and wellbeing while also balancing the impact of each requirement on the sustainability of the overall childcare market.

Licensing oversight is essential for child safety. However, as the supply of childcare shrinks, we must be pragmatic about the realities families face when they cannot access safe quality care. An overburdened childcare system will force families out of the formal system into wholly unsafe options. To maintain the health of our regulated system, it's important to recognize when rules and requirements are having outsized impacts.

Last year, lawmakers commissioned the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability to evaluate the Division of Early Childhood. The resulting OPEGA report identified several areas where current regulatory processes create unnecessary burdens for providers across the state.

For example, OPEGA reported that the most frequent noncompliance involved parents not re-signing emergency contact cards annually. The requirement was well intended, but in practice was taking a majority of provider and licensing staff capacity to address. With limited time and resources, the system should prioritize what most directly protects children. HB 1574 changes requirements to say emergency contact information must simply be kept current.

HB 1574 serves as a package of regulatory improvements in response to recommendations by OPEGA and the field. The bill creates a centralized unit to manage background checks and communicate status updates. The bill requires providers receive a documented warning and discussion rather than a violation for *new* regulatory requirements. It establishes a more appropriate complaint process that does not classify 81% of complaints as top priority. It prevents unnecessary punitive drops in EXCEL ratings for noncompliances. And it creates mandatory training requirements for active supervision of children.

Each of these changes is grounded in real challenges experienced by childcare providers across Maryland. These reforms will enhance child safety, improve regulatory clarity, strengthen oversight, and support provider stability at a time when families urgently need more access to quality childcare.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge favorable support for HB 1574.

Respectfully,

Molly McGriff

Senior Director, Untied for Childcare, United Way of Central Maryland

(410) 895-1383, molly.mcgriff@uwcm.org