



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over five thousand members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony in Support of HB 1574 Child Care Providers – Licensing and Registration Alterations and Workgroup to Study Illegally Provided Child Care

**Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee
March 12, 2026**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The **Maryland State Child Care Association** strongly supports **House Bill 1574**. This legislation thoughtfully responds to the findings of the **Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA)** licensing audit while advancing smart, balanced regulatory improvements that strengthen child safety, improve accountability, and stabilize Maryland's child care workforce—**without creating new costs for the State**.

HB 1574 reflects a modern regulatory approach: one that prioritizes safety and transparency, supports compliance over punishment, and ensures that child care programs can remain open, staffed, and accessible to working families.

Strengthening Safety Through Fair, Clear Enforcement

HB 1574 establishes a balanced enforcement framework that emphasizes communication and compliance. When a provider violates a newly adopted regulation within its first year, the Department must first issue a warning and discuss the requirement before imposing penalties. As the bill states, *“For the first violation, the Department shall warn the licensee or registrant and discuss the terms of the new rule or regulation”* (HB 1574, p. 3).

In a field experiencing significant staff and leadership turnover, this approach ensures providers clearly understand new expectations and can implement changes promptly—**without fear of immediate punitive action**. Clear communication strengthens compliance and ultimately improves outcomes for children.

Smart Regulatory Improvements Reflected in HB 1574

1. Improving Background Check Efficiency and Transparency

HB 1574 directly implements OPEGA's recommendation to improve the efficiency and transparency of criminal history records checks by establishing clear timelines for communication. The bill requires that *“within 10 days...the unit shall acknowledge receipt and notify the individual regarding the status of the application”* (HB 1574, p. 4).

Timely background check processing is essential. Parents cannot return to work and classrooms cannot open without staff in place. This provision strengthens safety **while also addressing workforce shortages**—a critical balance that supports families, providers, and children alike.

2. Enhancing Complaint Response and Oversight

HB 1574 strengthens oversight by requiring a **uniform complaint intake process** and a **standardized priority guide** with defined response times. The bill mandates procedures that “*differentiate complaints by the seriousness of the issue raised*” (HB 1574, p. 7).

This ensures that serious concerns receive immediate attention while all complaints are handled consistently and fairly. A standardized approach builds public trust and allows regulatory resources to be used where they matter most.

3. Addressing Illegally Provided Child Care

HB 1574 establishes the **Workgroup to Study Illegally Provided Child Care** to examine the scope, risks, and root causes of unlicensed care. The bill directs the workgroup to study “*the distinct, documented risks to the health and safety of children of illegally provided child care*” (HB 1574, p. 20).

This provision is essential to protecting children and ensuring that licensed providers—who follow the law and meet safety standards—are not undermined by illegal operations. Understanding the causes of unlicensed care is a necessary first step toward meaningful, effective solutions.

4. Requiring Active Supervision Training to Improve Child Safety

In response to increasing supervision-related compliance concerns identified by the Maryland State Department of Education, HB 1574 strengthens safety by requiring all child care teachers to complete **active supervision training**. The bill requires that a teacher “*complete active supervision training within 90 days after being hired*” (HB 1574, p. 12).

Active supervision is a proven strategy for preventing injuries and lapses in oversight. This requirement directly addresses one of the most common and preventable regulatory issues—**enhancing child safety through education rather than punishment**, and at no additional cost to the State.

5. Modernizing Lead Teacher Qualifications to Reflect Competency, Not Time Served

(Smart Regulation Supporting Workforce Stability)

HB 1574 modernizes lead teacher qualifications by shifting from rigid time-based requirements to **competency-based standards** aligned with national best practices. Rather than requiring years of experience, the bill allows educators to qualify through meaningful, supervised work.

Specifically, the bill requires that a teacher “*meet experiential and educational requirements that require not more than six months or 750 hours of work with young children in a supervisory setting*” (HB 1574, p. 12).

This change maintains rigorous standards while expanding the pipeline of qualified educators—helping Maryland recruit and retain staff without compromising quality or safety.

6. Supporting Quality Through Maryland EXCELS

(No-Cost Policy Supporting Stability and Access)

For providers participating in **Maryland EXCELS**, HB 1574 ensures fairness and transparency by requiring a corrective agreement before a rating is reduced due to licensing issues. The agreement must clearly outline “*the actions to be taken...to become compliant*” (HB 1574, p. 9).

Under current practice, programs can lose quality ratings—and critical funding—for an entire year even after correcting noncompliance. This disproportionately harms children and families by disrupting pre-K access, forcing staff layoffs, and causing program closures. HB 1574 introduces a **progressive, corrective approach** that preserves accountability while preventing unnecessary harm.

House Bill 1574 represents a thoughtful, comprehensive modernization of Maryland’s child care regulatory system. It advances OPEGA’s recommendations, strengthens child safety, improves regulatory clarity, and supports the stability of licensed child care programs—**all while remaining fiscally responsible.**

By prioritizing competency, communication, and compliance, HB 1574 ensures that regulations work **for children, families, and providers**, not against them.

For these reasons, the **Maryland State Child Care Association respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1574.**