

BERNICE MIREKU-NORTH, ESQ.
Legislative District 14
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee

Chair

Child Care Subcommittee

Early Childhood and
Special Education Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 222
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3539
800-492-7122 Ext. 3539
Bernice.Mireku-North@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 539: Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications –
Alterations**

February 18, 2026

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee, I come before you today to offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 539: Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications - Alterations**. This bill establishes a structured, probationary pathway for individuals seeking to become Child Care Teachers in center-based programs. This bill is a practical, workforce-driven solution that strengthens Maryland's child care system, while maintaining high quality and safety standards.

Under current regulations, Child Care Teachers must provide documentation of a high school diploma or GED, complete 90 hours of approved coursework, pass required health and background clearances, and complete all safety training before serving in that role. While these standards are important, the rigid documentation requirement has created an unintended barrier for qualified individuals who are prepared to work but cannot readily access their educational records.

HB539 would allow individuals to enter the workforce under a probationary status, while completing regulatory requirements. This pathway is not intended to be permanent. I am actively working with the Maryland State Department of Education on developing clear guardrails to ensure that individuals utilizing this probationary pathway ultimately obtain the required credentials.

The urgency of this bill is clear. According to the Office of the Comptroller, Maryland saw a 15% decline in child care providers between 2020 and 2024. The Comptroller's State of the Economy report further found that child care-related absences and turnover cost Maryland's

economy \$2.14 billion. Research from the Maryland Family Network and national studies consistently demonstrate that access to reliable, affordable child care directly impacts workforce participation and economic stability.

HB539 is an equitable, balanced solution to help rebuild our child care workforce. It expands opportunity, helps address a critical staffing shortage, and strengthens our economy. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to return a favorable report on House Bill 539.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernice Mireku-North". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light gray background behind it.

The Honorable Bernice Mireku-North, Esq.
Delegate. Maryland Legislative District 14
Maryland House of Delegates