



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

Testimony in Opposition of HB 1307
“Education – Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs (Support Youth Development for School–Age Children Act)”
Submitted to the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 30, 2021

Position: Oppose

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) opposes HB 1307, which would weaken Maryland’s strong position on child care safety regulations, by creating an exemption for certain child care providers as “emergency” legislation.

MDAEYC is a professional association of 1,500 early childhood educators, allied professionals, and families. We promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood education practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children. Many of our members are educators working in child care centers, family child care homes, and public schools.

All across the country, there is growing, bipartisan agreement around the urgent need to ensure that families have the opportunity to choose between quality child care settings, which they can afford, and in which their children are safe, healthy, and learning. Some choose to blame regulations for the existence of this broken market. Yet analysis from the Center for American Progress and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) finds no correlation between the strictness of state regulations and state levels of child care supply.¹ Furthermore, other research has shown that regulations provide important safety protections² for children and uphold the quality of early education and care.

Regulations that are sometimes perceived as burdensome, such as staff-to-child ratios, and mandatory background checks, are crucial elements of program quality and safety. Meaningful interaction between children and the adults who care for and educate them is a central component of early childhood development, and we know too much about

¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020, February). *Our Child Care Crisis is the Result of Underinvestment, not Overregulation*.
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/childcare-underinvestment-not-overregulation>

² Center for American Progress. (2017, October). *The Importance of Child Care Safety Protections*.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/10/30/441748/the-importance-of-child-care-safety-protections/>



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the importance of children's development in the early years - not to mention what can happen when children are left in unsafe environments - to ignore the benefits of a market with strong regulations.³ As amended in the House, the bill still has serious and potentially dangerous shortcomings, specifically with regards to background checks. Checks may still be conducted with outside organizations' protocols, not according to Maryland standards. Child Protective Services checks, an important second layer of vetting, may be omitted.

There is much that can be done to address access to quality childcare; what we cannot do is create loopholes for programs to operate without a license. The public health crisis and economic crisis have presented enormous challenges, but this is not the time to roll back the full approach to licensing in Maryland. We must insist on access to affordable, reliable, licensed child care in all of our diverse child care and education settings in Maryland through innovative strategies and a comprehensive review and revision of the current regulations as they pertain to school-age child care. This bill, however well-intentioned, provides a temporary band-aid to a system that lacks equity and consistency in our delivery of quality across all child care and education settings and fails to address the root causes of the current child care and education crisis in Maryland. This is why we strongly urge you to commit to equity and safety for all Maryland's children and oppose HB 1307. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to talk about ideas for supporting child care and education in Maryland.

If you have any questions, please contact: Christina Lopez, President, at christina.lopez@mdaeyc.org or 301-751-1626.

³ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2004). *Young children develop in an environment of relationships*. Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child.