



Testimony Concerning HB 1307 – Education - Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs (Support Youth Development for School-Age Children Act)

Submitted to Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

April 1, 2021

Position: Oppose

The Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA) is a non-profit association advocating on behalf of approximately 4700+ registered family child care providers and 140 large family child care homes in Maryland. These small businesses are a vital part of the child care delivery system in Maryland and a significant portion of the child care programs that remained open to essential personnel during the Pandemic. COVID-19 has caused damaging financial losses to many of these small programs due to parent unemployment and reduced enrollments. Registered providers typically care for 6 to 12 children in mixed-age group settings and are now operating with much smaller margins but struggling to remain in business.

HB 1307, Support Youth Development for School-Age Children Act, is legislation that will exempt certain youth development organizations from adhering to *all* of the rigorous standards currently mandated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). These regulations include, but are not limited to extensive criminal background checks for all those working with the children. In family child care this also includes everyone living in the household over eighteen years old. Why would we take this layer of protection away from children in School-age Programs? The programs supported by HB 1307 would follow more *modified* guidelines. MSFCCA is adamantly opposed to relaxing any standards of care when it comes to Maryland's children, regardless of age. Opening the door to child care programs that are not closely monitored for safety and quality is a mistake for the children.

The early childhood community in Maryland has long fought for *equitable quality child care* for all children in Maryland, and moving away from those ideals is not the direction we should be moving as a state. The children of Maryland deserve the best start possible, and that standard should continue throughout their school-age years. Families in Maryland depend on government agencies and this legislature to recognize the need for safe environments for *all* children, and not approve programs that are *less than the best*. Relaxed standards, less quality, and mediocre care is a recipe with disastrous results for children, and not the outcome that the Maryland Early Childhood workforce is known for.

This legislation appears to be intended as a *temporary emergency effort* to address a need for school-age child care, however there seems to be no end date in the Bill. The most discerning point of this is that many child care centers and family child care programs that are already open and operating have openings and could likely accommodate many of these school-age children. It may be expeditious to lessen the standard of care to some but a better alternative would be educating the public on the importance of quality licensed care.

Maryland is known as a leader in early care and education policy and we respectfully ask that you give HB 1307 an Unfavorable Vote. MSFCCA appreciates this opportunity to continue to advocate for children and families and welcomes any questions or comments. You can contact Rebecca Hancock, the MSFCCA Vice President of Public Policy at 240-299-0222 (cell) or 301-934-4445 (Home) to answer any questions concerning this testimony.