



**Testimony Concerning HB 1307:
“Education – Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs
(Support Youth Development for School-Age Children Act)”
Submitted to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
April 1, 2021**

Position: Oppose

Maryland Family Network (MFN) respectfully but vehemently opposes HB 1307, which would create exemptions to critical standards for school age child care in Maryland. Even as amended by the House, this legislation would undermine regulations and weaken safeguards designed to protect children in care arrangements outside their homes, potentially putting them at serious risk. MFN urges the Committee to reject this measure.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education, as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

A primary goal of child care licensing and regulation is safety. Maryland’s nationally lauded body of regulations also reflect the fact that all children in child care, regardless of their age, need safe and healthy environments, and they need providers who are trained to understand how children grow and learn. HB 1307 would place significant exemptions from regulation into statute. A new category of “youth development organizations and programs” would include some entities affiliated with national organizations, yet Maryland has no authority to set, monitor, or enforce compliance with whatever standards such affiliations may entail.

The bill as amended pulls from disparate sections of COMAR in an attempt to micro-manage regulations through statute in a way that will only apply during unusual circumstances. All parties, including the bill’s proponents, would be better served by a comprehensive review and revision of the regulations as they pertain to school-age child care.

The amended bill also fails to prioritize the use of unfilled capacity in licensed programs. This is especially important at time when drastically reduced child care enrollment threatens the survival of these programs. Licensed programs have already been vetted and inspected, and their staffs have undergone background checks and training according to Maryland’s standards. Their capacity should be exhausted before licensing exemptions are created.

There are pathways and resources available for youth development programs serving school-age children to become licensed—as indeed many have. In sad contrast, alarming examples from around the country demonstrate the potential for abuse and neglect in unregulated and under-regulated child care settings.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report for HB 1307.

