



**Testimony Concerning SB 711 – Growing Family Child Care
Opportunities Pilot Program – Established
Submitted to Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 9, 2021**

Position: Support

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 COVID-19 Pandemic. Family child care providers care for approximately 50% of all children in Maryland under the age of two in small mixed-age group settings. It is a unique learning environment flexible enough to meet each child's needs individually and the special relationships formed by children of various ages in family child care enhances the learning experience for all.

Over the years there has been a significant decline in existing family child care programs and an increased number have closed recently due to the pandemic. It is important to note that family child care providers are almost always women and a significant number are minorities and/or single family households. In 1996 there were 12, 500 registered Family Child Care Providers in Maryland. As of January 2020, there were 5,091 and as of February 2021 that number dropped again to 4,345, that's a recent decrease of 14.65%. At the rate family child care is declining in Maryland, what is now a significant shortage could become a child care crisis in the future.

MSFCCA is deeply concerned about this decline. Though there are multiple reasons for it, a lack of financial consistency is a significant concern to many that have left the profession. MSFCCA endorses any legislative actions that would facilitate expanding the availability of new registered Family Child Care Programs to serve Maryland families. SB 711, the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program, would provide grant funding to local jurisdictions for a 2-year

pilot program that would help establish quality family child care programs. Families having access to high-quality affordable child care is essential and targeting these programs for the above average poverty areas of urban, suburban and rural locations would help further equitable child care access across Maryland. In addition this Bill would support early education career pathways for women and minorities by allowing them to better financially support their families. The success of this Pilot Program would be evaluated December 1, 2021, and each year thereafter to continue building a more sustainable workforce of caregivers. Ample child care programs are critical to Maryland's infrastructure and our ability to create a strong and healthy economy.

Maryland has been a consistent leader in early care and education policy and giving SB 711 a favorable vote will begin the process of saving an industry that is vitally important to families and the future economy. MSFCCA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this legislation and welcomes any questions or comments. Feel free to 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.