

March 1, 2021

Testimony Concerning HB 1307:
Education – Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs

Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means

Prince George's Child Resource Center, Inc., has been providing services to the child care community and advocating for families for three decades. HB 1307 is not in the best interest of children in their families. Additionally, it further damages the licensed child care workforce (already struggling due to the pandemic), who have been dedicated to providing high quality early childhood education in Prince George's County safely and legally. There ARE available child care slots in safe, licensed programs; **to create a loophole for someone to operate without a license makes children less safe and punishes those who have invested time and money into meeting the rigorous standards set by MSDE.**

Why is licensed care important? It's important because it means that the program and providers:

- meet the state's requirements for health and safety in the program's operations
- are trained in appropriate supervision and accountability practices
- follow health practices
- have sufficient numbers of adults to supervise based on the number of children in the program
- are regularly monitored
- **are adhering to one system in Maryland for parents to navigate**

School-age child care – whether it is before or after school, in the summer months, or supporting virtual learning - requires and deserves appropriate safety and health practices too. We believe that all programs responsible for the well-being and safety of children should be licensed, adhere to basic safety and health standards, and receive the support of monitoring, assistance and resources from MSDE.

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 settings in Maryland.

- As of February 7, 2021, according to MSDE data, 181 licensed programs in Prince George's have not yet re-opened.
- As of February 5, 2021, according to MSDE data, 898 licensed centers and family child care homes across the state are not yet open and operating.
- While a majority of licensed settings are open, they face deep challenges of under-enrollment and the pressures of their operating budgets as parent demand is so varied. The economic impact on child care has been devastating. **We must stabilize the child care sector and the well-being of people who work in child care.**

These challenges are not solved by exempting some child care settings from licensure. If any child care programs are struggling with licensing, they need support, not an exemption. **HB 1307 is not an emergency bill.** We have an **opportunity** to address the child care crisis through federal investment, General Assembly leadership, and MSDE action.

Please oppose HB 1307. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to talk about ideas for supporting child care in Maryland.

Sincerely,

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