

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**

I am writing to you today on behalf of *Jaycees Early Learning Center Fort Washington, MD Prince Georges County*

- Our center is licensed and in full compliance with Maryland State Department of Education regulations
- Our center is level 4 Maryland Excel
- Our capacity is 117 and we currently have 50 enrolled
- We presently have 14 teachers as opposed to 20

A child care license is not just a piece of paper. It means a provider meets basic standards for health and safety; it means expectations of training and qualifications; it means this is a profession. Licensure is part of Maryland's efforts at expanding access to quality child care, not something to hide from.

Every day that hard work is undermined when we allow unlicensed providers to carry out services. Now there is legislation to weaken Maryland's strong position on this issue. HB 1307 would create an exemption for certain program providers as "emergency" legislation. This is not the emergency that needs attention.

We should not be in the business of creating a loophole for someone 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 settings in Maryland.

- "Parents think these unlicensed programs they are legit, licensed."
- "What happened to the "who is watching your child?" campaign?"
- "Until there is enforcement of illegal child care, what motivates these people to stop?"
- "I'm confused. I have to comply with licensure."
- "Why are we here? We've been over this."
- "It just opens the door for more people to bypass licensure."
- "Why have licensed for some programs and not for all?"

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

Families are doing their best, choosing from among what they can afford with too often too little support.

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 pandemic crisis and the economic crisis have created enormous challenges for child care programs.

- 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. This is not the emergency. 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. I can be reached at (301)248-2185.

Sincerely,

*Deborah A. Williams*  
*Director*