



***Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource¹...***

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 4500 members and our members provide care and education for Maryland children and support working families. We believe children are our most important natural resources and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

**Testimony Concerning HB 1307
Education- Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs
(Support Youth Development for School Age Act)
Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee
March 3, 2021
Position: Opposed**

MSCCA opposes HB 1307. Although we support Youth Development organizations and programs that play a critical role in communities, MSCCA does not support this legislation as written. There are thousands of licensed child care centers, family child care programs and licensed school age programs comprised of small Maryland businesses with a workforce of primarily diverse women of color that have worked tirelessly to meet State standards and have stepped up during the pandemic to meet the even more stringent CDC standards specific to child care to remain open as well as reopen to serve school age children. These struggling businesses have suffered significant financial losses due to reduced enrollment. Passing HB 1307 will hurt our already devastated licensed child care businesses by carving out exceptions to State regulations. These organizations/programs have options and can choose to become licensed in our State, therefore expanding their ability to serve children as other businesses are doing.

Many youth development organizations were given waivers by MSDE during the height of the pandemic to assist with child care for essential personnel, however this is no longer necessary as most licensed programs are now open with openings who are willing and able to serve at risk children and accept child care subsidy/scholarship vouchers. Additionally, HB 1307 provides no sunset clause language related to emergency purposes.

MSDE data shared conveyed there were 7, 858 licensed providers pre-pandemic in March 2020. As of December 2020, MSDE reported that 6, 577 licensed providers had completed a form and been approved to reopen to serve children and families. There were 977 that have not submitted a form to reopen and 279 had permanently closed their doors. Updates from in February 2021, MSDE now reports 500 licensed programs have permanently closed. In the wake of COVID, our State should be focused on stabilizing child care industry as the federal government is providing funding to CCDF to ensure essential child care is viable post pandemic, not make exceptions for those programs who do not want to become licensed.

The licensed/registered child care programs that are currently open serve roughly 45-55 percent of their historic capacity. Licensed child care is an essential service enabling Maryland's economy to flourish. We are all concerned about the future of child care and the workforce. In the best of times, the America's child care industry operates on razor-slim margins. Providers have high fixed costs and important teacher-to-child ratios that cap revenue capacity. HB 1307 is asking to change regulations for youth development organizations/programs when there are thousands of small licensed child care businesses with ability to serve low income children using child care scholarships/subsidies.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our providers have faced catastrophic reductions in children served while fixed costs were unchanged and additional expenses incurred due CDC guidelines for child care. HB 1307 will negatively impact and quite possibly close more small businesses that have met all the legal, required regulations, including high health and safety standards that Youth Development organizations/programs, with very limited national standards, do not come close to providing the crucial safety and qualifications standards our State recognizes.

MSCCA would recommend a workgroup of Youth Development organizations/programs, MSDE, licensed child care programs and other experts to review and revise current school age regulations in Maryland, national oversight and standards as a way to

update or create inclusive types of school age care delivery systems that meet important standards ensuring health/safety, qualifications for staff, equity and access.

MSCCA urges an unfavorable committee report.