

March 1, 2021

Delegate Anne Kaiser, Chair
Ways and Means Committee

Dear Ways and Means Committee members,

We represent 4 nonprofit child care organizations in Montgomery County and we are writing to express our **opposition to HB 1307**, Education – Child Care Centers and Youth Development Organizations and Programs (Support Youth Development for School–Age Children Act).

This bill is a dramatic, far reaching elimination of MSDE regulations that are critical to meeting the basic health and safety needs of Maryland’s school-age children and youth. MSDE’s Office of Child Care (OCC) regulates licensed programs and supports quality programming for children and youth by requiring staff background checks, health and safety protocols, staff qualifications and professional development, and fitness of facilities being used. The monitoring and oversight of licensed school-age child care programs by MSDE OCC provides critical compliance protocols and assurances for children’s safety and program quality.

The State has no significant ability to set, monitor or enforce any standards that may be associated with national affiliations, as proposed in this bill. Furthermore, this bill would incorporate a possible multitude of unknown subcontractors, basically eliminating safety and quality oversight.

The past year has highlighted numerous inequities throughout our society. **The best way to address the needs of underserved school-age children and youth is to reduce the barriers to quality and safe programming, not to lower quality and safety standards and compliance.**

At a time when many licensed school age child care programs are experiencing lower enrollment and increased operating costs due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the State of Maryland should invest in licensed school-age programs to expand access and eliminate barriers for families. All school-age children deserve to be in programs that are licensed, regulated and monitored by the MSDE OCC. There are spaces available in currently established school-age programs that are MSDE licensed and accredited, and participate in the Maryland EXCELS program for high-quality child care. **ALL school-age children, despite their socio-economic status deserve a safe, healthy place to be during out of school time.**

Maryland has long recognized the importance of safe high quality child care. Recent investments in child care subsidies for families and the EXCELS program that supports quality improvement should be strengthened at this critical time. Maryland’s school age children and youth deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Lesley Walsh-Everhart

Chief Executive Director

Academy Child Development Center, Inc.

Michelle Martineau Green

Executive Director

Montgomery Child Care Association, Inc. (MCCA)

Laura Bardini

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Wonders Early Learning + Extended Day