



Greenway Learning Center  
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February 3, 2021

To: General Assembly  
From: Patti L. Smith

**Testimony Concerning H.B 608, the Early Childhood Education - Child Care Provider Support Grant Program (The Child Care Provider Support Act)**

**Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means**

HELP!!! Licensed child care providers and family providers in Maryland need your support.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Prince George's County was home to 747 family child care programs and 377 centers. I am writing to you today on behalf of Greenway Learning Center for Infants and Children in Greenbelt, Maryland (Prince Georges County)


When Governor Hogan ordered the closure of child care centers and family child care homes due to COVID-19, the Maryland State Department of Education created an application process for child care programs to be available to serve essential workers. **Our 1,124 licensed child care programs shrank to 435 programs for essential workers only.** With the permission to re-open granted later in 2020, all area child care programs (whether they stayed opened or closed temporarily) continue to climb back, under-enrolled, with staffing challenges, and the continued stress and fear of COVID-19.

We have an opportunity to address the child care crisis thanks to Delegate Solomon introducing HB 608, the Child Care Provider Support Act. This legislation calls for flexible grants for licensed child care centers and family child care homes in the Maryland EXCELS program. As a child care center licensed for 44 children, level 1 in Maryland Excels and currently operating at half of my licensed capacity I am in desperate need of support through the Child Care Provider Support Act. Not only programs in Maryland Excels but ALL licensed child care providers need financial support. I have operated a successful child care program for over thirty years and without support may be forced to close my doors permanently. Rent is due, my dedicated employees need and deserve to be paid (I have worked hard to not terminate/lay them off to avoid adding to the unemployment issues plaguing Maryland)., we need to continue to provide health insurance coverage for them and we need assistance in order to continue to provide quality and loving care for the children of Greenbelt, Maryland. Maryland's children deserve the best and we owe it to them.

Child care in Prince George County was in crisis prior to COVID-19 presenting its challenges. Regulated child care, both family child care and center-based programs, had been on a steady decline in our county since 2015. The economic impact on child care has been devastating. There is no time to lose. Each day brings a new challenge for licensed child care programs and we are grateful for your leadership. We must stabilize the child care sector and the well-being of

people who work in child care. We must also rebuild child care better than before. Together, we can do this. Thank you for supporting the Child Care Provider Support Act. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to talk about ideas for supporting child care in Maryland. When cutting the fat from the states budget-REMEMBER-child care is the muscle to reopening the economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patti L. Smith', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Patti L. Smith

Director

Greenway Learning Center

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