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MAYOR

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HB 0089

February 3, 2022

TO: Members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 89 – Child Care Stabilization Grant Program and Child Care Expansion Grant Program – Established

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration **supports House Bill 89**.

In an effort to promote access to childcare, HB 89 establishes a Child Care Stabilization Grant Program in the State Department of Education which would support licensed child care providers in the state that are in danger of closing in the next 12 months due to financial hardship. It also establishes a Child Care Expansion Grant Program which would increase access and availability of licensed care providers in the state by providing financial assistance to new or existing child care providers.

From 2016-2020, there were 24 child homicides committed by a parent or caregiver. Through the Baltimore City Child Fatality Review (CFR) program, a subcommittee was established in order to uncover the drivers of these homicides in Baltimore City. This subcommittee was composed of public health professionals, health care providers, and community advocates. During review of 37 cases of fatal and near-fatal child abuse and neglect, this subcommittee saw that many of these children were placed in the care of a known unsafe caregiver due to the parent not having a safer option. In one case, a mother without any other source of regular child care left for work with her toddler in the care of her boyfriend, against whom she had filed a peace order 6 weeks earlier; he had been charged with second-degree assault in an incident of intimate partner violence. The toddler died from multiple injuries resulting from beating and shaking. In another case, a mother with a long history of treatment for depression left her 1-year-old twins in the care of her ex-boyfriend, despite that they had separated due to intimate partner violence and that they had had a physical altercation earlier that

day during which he had threatened to kill her and the children. She needed to visit someone in the hospital and had no other option for child care. The twins were beaten and seriously injured, with one becoming unresponsive in the ED but subsequently revived.

Unfortunately, there are many more cases like this. Lack of safe, quality child care must be addressed in order to prevent child abuse and neglect fatalities. In too many cases, a child was in the care of an unsafe caregiver, whether a caregiver who was a perpetrator of intimate partner violence or previous abuse or neglect of that child, a sibling, or another child. In order for parents to make good choices for their children, they must also have access to safe, quality, affordable child care. That being said, it is our collective responsibility to make sure there are as many safe child care resources as possible in order to safeguard the health of children in our community. The Child Care Stabilization Grant Program and Child Care Expansion Grant Program would give new and existing licensed child care providers the support they need to do the very important work of ensuring that the children in our community are safe when their regular caregivers are away. We urge legislators to support these grant programs in order to protect safe child care resources and the well-being of children in our community.

For these reasons, we request a **favorable** report on House Bill 89.