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MAYOR

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HB 89

March 29, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 89 – State Department of Education - Child Care Stabilization Grants

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration **supports** House Bill (HB) 89.

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 have faced financial or operational hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Preferences is given to providers that have significant risk of closing within the next 12 months, participate in the Child Care Scholarship Program, are located in areas lacking child care slot, or serve low-income and special needs populations as well as children under two.

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.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests request a **favorable** report on House Bill 89.