



House Bill 89

Child Care Stabilization Grant Program and Child Care Expansion Grant Program - Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means and
Appropriations Committees

Date: February 3, 2022

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 89. This bill would support currently licensed child care providers in the state and would incentivize the establishment of new providers. It comes at a time when the child care community and county resources are pushed to their brink.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the shortage of licensed child care providers to support the safe care of Maryland's kids and support the state's working families. Maryland does not currently have enough licensed providers to meet the needs of such families balancing work, child care, and the ongoing pandemic, as many providers had to cease operation due to public health risk and financial instability associated with COVID-19. Those providers that remain in operation are struggling to stay afloat, and many are unable to provide reliable child care.

HB 89 seeks to address these issues. The bill would provide existing child care providers with stabilization grants to help offset costs and fiscal instability, and would incentivize new providers to come into the market via significant financial assistance to establish licensed child care providers. Furthermore, the grants established in HB 89 are authorized to support a variety of critical expenses associated with operating a safe and reliable child care facility, including materials and programming, staff training, and relevant to the ongoing pandemic, cleaning supplies.

While counties have creatively addressed the needs of reliable and safe child care, they welcome State contribution to stabilize the industry. County departments of parks and recreation, for example, have provided after school and interactive programming, and county governments have partnered with local nonprofits around the state to lessen the impact of Maryland's child care crisis. However, these programs do not take the place of reliable and dedicated child care providers.

Reliable and safe child care is critical for economic development, successful families and communities, and the development of children. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 89 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.