

February 21, 2023

**Testimony Concerning SB 873:
“Child Care Provider Stabilization Program – Established”**

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Education, Energy and Environment

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Child care providers are in crisis, and so are families, and Prince George’s County is no exception. I am no exception.

SB 873 calls for monthly payments to licensed child care providers who are willing and able to enroll children who receive a subsidy through the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP). I urge your support for this legislation.

Through this bill, I could receive as much as \$2,500 per month to be used for cleaning and food supplies, early childhood educator wages, and the ongoing expenses of running my program and being available to the families counting on me so that they can go to work. I thank Senator Washington for leading this bill and for seeing what it takes to do this every day.

- Perfect Harmony is a licensed child care – 251484
- Our license capacity is 56 and currently have 35 enrolled children
- We are willing and currently enroll families who pay with the child care scholarship
- We have 23 children using the child care scholarship

In Prince George’s County, area child care providers like me are experiencing deep challenges with funding/finances, staffing and enrollment which are all totally intertwined. The stabilization funds offered in 2021 and 2022 were an important step. There is more to be done.

The proposed additional \$2500 per month in state stabilization grant funding would great help my program by

- Allowing me to increase my staff’s pay. Currently, I am only able to pay them at minimum wage or slightly above minimum wage. It is difficult to pay more without increasing parent cost, that most parents struggle to pay without assistance.
- Allowing me to provide my staff bonuses. My staff have endured during the pandemic which included reduced hours, no pay increases and the stress of them working during the pandemic. I lost a few employees as a result. The ones that remained deserve bonus for all they done.
- I had to subsidize several families weekly tuition, that were not eligible for the child care scholarship, but still have financial hardship to pay for child care. The \$2500 will help to offset that cost.
- Allowing me to make safety repairs to our playground. It has been difficult to address capital repairs while struggling to pay fair wages and subsidizing families’ tuitions, and the wear and tear on our fence and playground equipment is beginning to become a safety concern and affecting student experience.

- Allowing me to promote our center so enrollment can return to pre-covid levels. Prior to covid, Perfect Harmony was at maximum capacity of 56 and has had difficulty reaching families to achieve our current enrollment of 35.

We need help rebuilding our businesses and keeping our quality, relationship-based practices strong, so we can be there for working parents and for young children. The quality of child care, and the experience of the birth-to-five years, are crucial to school readiness and supporting working families.

We must continue to take steps to stabilize the child care sector and the well-being of people who work in child care, and we must also rebuild child care better than before.

The child care crisis is not over in Maryland. Thank you for your leadership and your support for child care through recent General Assembly sessions. There's more to do and we can do it together. Thank you for supporting SB 873.