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**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee's
Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee**

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Over the last two years, the Maryland General Assembly took big steps forward for child care. Our state's choices for payment rates and family eligibility in the Child Care Scholarship (formerly known as Child Care Subsidy) program matter to Prince George's County families and communities. Thank you for not only increasing the payment rate in 2018, but also for speeding up the timeline in 2019 to make sure that investment makes an immediate impact.

Prince George's Child Resource Center envisions vibrant, healthy communities where individuals and families care, support and advocate for each other and invest in creating opportunities for children to develop strong, successful life paths. The Resource Center has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they seek child care where their children can thrive.

The proposed FY 2021 budget for MSDE's Division of Early Childhood maintains level investments in several key early childhood programs—including home visiting, the Maryland Infants & Toddlers Program, early childhood mental health consultation, and the State's networks of Child Care Resource Centers and Family Support Centers. The proposed budget also includes increases in State general funds and special funds for prekindergarten expansion that more than offset the loss of a recently expired federal grant. **We urge your support for these investments.**

The Resource Center and our colleagues around the state urge MSDE and the General Assembly to work vigilantly and diligently to maintain and grow investments in child care. We are concerned about the sustainability of state investments in child care, and we also see first-hand that there is more work to be done.

We have a crisis in our county: the number of licensed child care centers and family child care homes is decreasing. We are also troubled that in Prince George's County, only 16% of family child care providers and only 33% of child care centers are willing to enroll families who pay with subsidy/scholarship. This matters for families with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. We can change this, and help child care programs to



open and stay open successfully and offer more choices for families, when we make sure that all the pieces and parts of policy ideas come together.

Parents cannot afford to pay any more, and providers cannot afford to make any less. The drive for quality is challenged by illegally-operating care and insufficient investment over many years.

Let's work together and recognize the role that Child Care Scholarship and child care licensing play in ensuring that the child care workforce and our families can thrive, and ensure that efforts to expand early education opportunities reach our communities. The federal investments over the last two years in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, and the Birth-to-Five Preschool Development Grant are all welcome opportunities that are making a real-life difference, too.

We are turning our challenges around in Maryland, but there is more to be done. Thanks to you, there is momentum on our side. The Resource Center will continue to lift up the stories of families and child care providers succeeding. The quality of child care, and the experience of the birth-to-five years, are crucial to school readiness.

Thank you for your leadership for our community.