

Testimony Concerning HB 1300/SB 1000 “Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Implementation”

Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, Senate Education, Health, Environmental Affairs Committee, and House Ways and Means Committee

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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.

We have actively participated in opportunities to shape the Kirwan Commission proposals, as well as the timely, federal 0-5 Preschool Development Grant strategic plan. The state has also taken crucial steps forward for child care assistance payment rates and family eligibility, and we are seeing real impact in our community.

We commend the mixed delivery approach to delivering preK.

The Kirwan Commission and the “Blueprint” legislation stand strong on a mixed delivery approach to delivering preK. The whole community benefits from partnering with early childhood educators in child care programs.

Children experience healthy child development crucial for success in school and in life, in any setting. We can and must make those experiences possible in family child care, in centers, and in school-based programs.

Community-based child care programs can provide continuity of care for infants, preschoolers, and school-age children, building strong relationships that are key to healthy early childhood development.

Licensed family child care and child care centers are deeply embedded in the richness of their communities, offering developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are part of the intention of Kirwan’s preK proposal. This is an opportunity to explore the relationship between equity, cultural competence and quality in Maryland as we build out our systems, programs and experiences.

Licensed family child care and child care centers across Maryland meet the full working day, full working year, and often round-the-clock needs of families. Maryland should fully leverage the power of community-based child care to ensure learning opportunities for young children that meet the needs of families – in both licensed family child care homes and child care centers.

How we do things will matter.

Our Resource Center team has been engaging with family child care providers to learn more about their experiences and aspirations, and to identify *how* Maryland’s state and county agencies, organizations and initiatives, can work collaboratively to ensure that family child care can thrive.

We are exploring the work of the states that have built partnerships and mixed delivery into their preK policies, including those that have empowered and enabled family child care programs to participate. While we are building and growing the right system for Maryland, we must ensure at the same time that a robust child care system is sustained. This is crucial for working parents, for employers, and for the state's economy.

We can connect child care options and early learning opportunities.

The drive for quality is challenged when we separate the ideas of child care from the ideas of early learning. We must couple these ideas and recognize the community-based programs around Prince George's County and all of Maryland.

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.

Family child care providers note a need for investment; health care; improved processes and procedures for child care licensing compliance; and stronger entry-points to the profession. More work can be done to ensure meaningful participation in Maryland EXCELS and to ensure the early childhood workforce can thrive. These are the pathways that are the foundation of preK program success.

All of this is connected as we prepare our students to compete in the workforce and the global economy.

Thank you for your leadership.