**March 14, 2022**

**Favorable Testimony Concerning Support for:**

**SB0920 Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations**

**Submitted to the Senate Committee on Education, Health and Environmental Affairs**

**Your first and last name**

**The name of your program**

**Address of your program**

**Phone number to reach you**

**Email address to reach you**

**We urge your support for SB0920.**

Child care providers across the nation continue to struggle as they recover during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Child care providers are in crisis, and so are families, and Prince George’s County is no exception.

Insert some things about you/your program, for instance:

* That you are licensed
* If you are in EXCELS or not in EXCELS
* If you are or are able to enroll families who pay with scholarship/subsidy or not able to enroll families who pay with scholarship/subsidy
* Your licensed capacity and how many children are enrolled now
* If you have staff, how many you would have ordinarily and how many you have now

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 were an important step. There is more to be done.

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.

SB0920 addresses a variety of concerns that both parents and providers experience about the scholarship program. First, the bill establishes presumptive eligibility for families accessing child care scholarship meaning they can start work activities right away knowing they can enroll in child care and the provider can expect scholarship payment. The bill establishes copay relief for some families experiencing challenges. The bill ends pursuit of child support enforcement to qualify for child care scholarship! The bill also calls for scholarship payment from MSDE to providers within 10 days of MSDE receiving a provider’s invoice.

Insert your own ideas about what a difference it would make to have…

* Families with access to presumptive eligibility for child care scholarship
* Payment from MSDE 10 days after you invoice them
* Families relieved from the burden of compliance with child support enforcement
* Families relieved from co pays when they experience challenges, with payment from MSDE instead

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.

Thank you for your leadership for our community. Together we can help child care programs to stay open successfully and offer more choices for families, when we make sure that all the pieces and parts of policy ideas come together.