



## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 711

### Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Established

**To:** Chair Paul Pinsky and Members of the Environmental, Health and Education Committee

**From:** Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore

**Date:** March 9, 2020

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports SB711 Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Established as it would authorize the Maryland State Department of Education to provide grants to local jurisdictions or child care licensing regions to increase the supply of and ensure sustainability for family child care providers in areas with above average rates of poverty and unemployment.

Family child care providers typically offer a more affordable options for those with limited income who seek quality early childhood education for their young ones. COVID-19 has caused several of these centers to close because they did not have the proper tools or cash reserves to navigate business while in a pandemic. As a result of this challenge, young children missed out on over a year of learning. There was simply nowhere for them to go. Even before the pandemic, the number of family childcare providers was declining. Furthermore, this decline is project to continue through 2025 according to a study by Maryland Family Network<sup>1</sup>. If passed, SB711 will serve as an economic development tool by providing adequate supports to prospective operations thereby encouraging more people will be encouraged to open family child care centers.

To be clear, SB711's goal is not just to create more family childcare centers but to have operators who provide quality education and are sustainable. This issue is extremely important for the residents for Baltimore City because of the high number of children in need of a quality start to their educational journey. Oftentimes, residents are reluctant to begin the process of opening family childcare centers because of barriers in place and the time that it takes to start the center. SB711 creates a pilot program that provides grant assistance to establish and support local centers, providing what is needed for children to be ready to enter school. Children are more likely to thrive in small, family childcare centers because of the amount of attention that can be given to each child in this setting. Parents are also likely to feel more comfortable sending their child to a family-run child care center, especially if the center is in the same neighborhood.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League works collaboratively to support data-informed, community-driven solutions to align resources to dismantle systemic barriers that limit the possibilities for children, families, and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/BaltimoreCity\\_0.pdf](https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/BaltimoreCity_0.pdf). Page 9

Our policy advocacy work is also guided by and in support of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention Youth and Victim Services' Results for Child Well-Being. Through our strategic planning process, we have prioritized three of these results areas, focusing on the success of Baltimore City's children in school; the economic stability of families; and the safety of communities for children, youth, and families. We support SB711 in particular because of its alignment with the result areas that work to ensure "Children Enter School Ready to Learn" and that "Families are Economically Stable."

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