

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 4, 2021

Mr. Mohammed Choudhury  
State Superintendent of Schools  
State Department of Education  
Office of State Superintendent  
Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury,

We are writing to share concerns we have heard from child care providers across our state about delays in the distribution of American Rescue Plan stabilization dollars. Given the demands and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is urgent that these funds are allocated to child care providers as quickly and transparently as possible.

Maryland's child care system serves as the precursor for school readiness and the overall healthy physical, social, and emotional development of young children. And, for families, child care is an essential lifeline, enabling caregivers to work and further their education with the knowledge that their children are in safe and nurturing environments.

Child care facilities have played a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing care for first responders and essential workers and for families navigating virtual learning. But across the entire child care industry, providers continue to face tremendous instability and disrupted funding streams. Early childhood educators and child care providers have been under immense pressure throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and made extraordinary efforts to follow public health guidance, while trying to ensure infants, toddlers, and young children retain access to enriching early learning. According to a survey conducted by the Maryland Family Network in January, child care providers reported an average increase in costs of over \$5,339 a month related to personal protective equipment, cleaning and sanitizing needs, and the implementation of health and safety guidelines. Furthermore, due to decreased enrollment, the Maryland Family Network found that Maryland child care providers – already operating on thin margins before the pandemic – were losing a total of \$9.6 million a week in revenue.<sup>1</sup>

According to Child Care Aware, 345 family- and 225 center-based child care providers in Maryland remained closed as of September 20, 2021, comprising 16,265 slots.<sup>2</sup> Over 600 licensed

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Family Network. (2021, March). *Caring in a Time of Pandemic: Will Maryland's Child Care Survive COVID-19?*

<sup>2</sup> Child Care Aware. (2021, September 20) *Maryland Child Care Supply*.

Maryland child care providers have closed permanently since the start of the pandemic as reported by the Maryland State Child Care Association.<sup>3</sup> This risks exacerbating the deep inequities that already existed in child care availability in the state. Prior to the pandemic, half of Marylanders, including 52% of rural Marylanders and 70% in low-income neighborhoods, lived in child care deserts, communities with little to no access to child care options.<sup>4</sup> 53% of Black Marylanders and 61% of Latino Marylanders live in child care deserts.<sup>5</sup>

To help stabilize our child care industry, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of 2021 both made critical investments, resulting in Maryland receiving a total of approximately \$45.821 million and \$130.43 million respectively to defray the additional costs faced by child care providers and provide tuition relief to families.

Recognizing the continued needs of our child care system, we worked to secure additional funding in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, including \$14.99 billion for the discretionary Child Care and Development Fund and \$23.97 billion for the Child Care Stabilization Fund. States began receiving these funds on April 15, 2021, and Maryland has received a total of approximately \$502 million across these programs.

However, we are deeply concerned that the Maryland State Department of Education has not yet distributed the American Rescue Plan Child Care Stabilization grants to child care providers. These funds are a critical lifeline for the 5,200 center- and home-based providers whose grant applications have already been approved and for the families they serve, and every day of delay poses risks of additional closures. We urge you to act expeditiously to process and disburse these crucial funds.

Child care remains a keystone in our efforts to ensure an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and for the long-term success of Maryland's families. We look forward to working with you to support Maryland's child care providers so that all of Maryland's children have the opportunity to thrive now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

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<sup>3</sup> Maryland State Child Care Association as self-reported on 29 September 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Malik, R., Hamm, K., Schochet, L., Novoa, C., Workman, S., & Jessen-Howard, S. (2018, December 6). *Child Care Deserts*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress



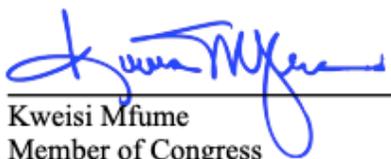
Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



David J. Trone  
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress

/s/

Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader

/s/

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor

Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Early Childhood Steven Hicks, Maryland State

Department of Education