



County Council Bill 38 – 21: Economic Development Fund – Local Business Child Care Grant
Program – Established
Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
Mike Subin, Executive Committee Member At-Large
November 9, 2021

Good afternoon, Council President Hucker, Vice President Albornoz, and members of the County Council. I am here today on behalf of the Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's federally designated anti-poverty group. We thank the Council for your ongoing efforts to increase access to child care in the County, including the expansion of Pre-K classes from part-day to full-day programs, establishing grants for child care providers so that they could maintain their businesses during the pandemic, and your support for the County's Early Care and Education Initiative.

As advocates for the low-income community and as the governing body for Head Start, along with the Head Start Parents Policy Council, our board recognizes the critical need for affordable, high-quality early care and education. We support Bill 38-21 as an opportunity to expand access to child care for more Montgomery County families.

Child care costs in Montgomery County are the highest in the state.¹ For many families, child care is the largest monthly expense – higher than housing, food, or healthcare. According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard, a family of four with two adults, one infant, and one preschooler will spend \$2,773 each month on child care costs alone – about \$1,000 more than on housing.²

¹ https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/2020_MFN_Demographics.pdf

² https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/SSS%20Report%20for%20MC_2017_FINAL.pdf

These numbers present extreme challenges for many in our community, especially given the fact that the Self-Sufficiency Standard for this same family is an annual income of \$105,925, but the household would only earn \$63,630 annually at the current Montgomery County minimum wage.

Bill 38-21 would help to address this serious issue facing our community by providing some relief to employees struggling to pay for child care and by hopefully encouraging more employers to establish Flexible Spending Account benefits. The savings to employees who are eligible for these accounts will be quite beneficial, but the Community Action Board also recognizes the need for direct financial support for families struggling to pay for child care. We regularly hear from participants in our advocacy training program for low-income residents, the Community Advocacy Institute, that child care costs place incredible burdens on families. Many participants note that access to child care is the primary community issue for which they are concerned. We strongly encourage the County Council to explore other innovative programs and policies that will further expand access to child care. Our board supports a mixed delivery system that supports family child care providers, child care centers, nonprofit partners, as well as public child care options.

The Community Action Board applauds the Council's work to address child care needs in the County and ensure that all families can obtain high-quality care. We are committed to working with you to continue to explore new options and opportunities for expanded access.