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**Testimony**  
**Montgomery County Council**  
**Support of Bill 38-21 Local Business Childcare Grant Program**  
**November 9, 2021**

Council President Hucker, Vice President Albornoz, and Councilmembers, thank you for the opportunity to speak as one of the Co-chairs of Montgomery Moving Forward, an initiative of Nonprofit Montgomery, in support of Bill 38-21, the Local Business Childcare Grant Program.

This legislation continues Montgomery County's strong support of early care and education (ECE), which is so vital to our county's economic vitality and our residents' well-being.

MMF agrees that affordable, high quality childcare and early education is critical to the success of employers and the overall health of the economy in Montgomery County, and indeed to a full recovery from the economic consequences of the pandemic. ECE is essential infrastructure for employers large, small, for profit, and nonprofit alike. High quality, affordable ECE supports the workforce of today, by enabling employees to go to their jobs knowing that their children are safe and well cared for, and supports the workforce of tomorrow, by giving children a strong start that will propel them into kindergarten, laying the foundation for a lifetime of achievement. Availability of childcare is one of the factors that talented potential employees consider when evaluating a job and a location.

Childcare in this region is very expensive, costing as much as \$33,000 a year per child. The US Department of Health and Human Services says that childcare should absorb no more than seven percent of family income. With median income at about \$110,000 in the county, most families are paying three to five times as much as they should for childcare. Yet, wages in the childcare industry are shockingly low, with many workers making less than they would at MacDonald's. Providers need extra support just to break even.

That's why this bill is so important. Parents are struggling to pay tuition and childcare centers are struggling to stay open, especially given the sharp decline in the number of children attending childcare programs during the pandemic. Providing employers including nonprofits with support to help working parents afford childcare will help families go back to work, use childcare, and enable more childcare centers to operate close to or at capacity. In doing so, there will in turn, be more spots for families as centers rehire staff.

By targeting funds to small businesses and nonprofits to enable them to support employees making less than \$125,000, the legislation directs dollars precisely where they can make the most difference. While large employers can often afford to offer expansive benefits, small employers need help. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy. Enabling these employers to attract and retain workers is important to sustaining a robust economy in our county.

Thank you again for giving Montgomery Moving Forward the opportunity to give testimony today, and for this investment in making high quality affordable childcare available to all Montgomery County residents.