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Bill 42-21, Child Care–Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity

The Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce supports Bill 42-21 to establish an early care and education coordinating entity. We know that access to early care and education has a direct impact on our local economy through attraction and retention of the current workforce as well as ensuring an educated, skilled workforce for the future.

We often ask business owners what’s keeping them up at night. Nine times out of ten its staffing and workforce development. Although this was an issue before the pandemic, we have truly reached a crisis point. The current worker shortage has added a significant burden to business owners who were already in dire straits.

We know that a major obstacle for individuals entering or staying in the workforce is access to quality child care. The economics of the childcare industry do not work for families on the lower end of the economic spectrum. Families are often forced to make alternative decisions such as unlicensed childcare, reliance of family support that may not be ideal, or parents leaving the workforce all together – most often mothers.

Over the past 20 months, we’ve had a front row seat to what happens when the childcare industry breaks down. Although we knew disparities existed, the pandemic exposed ongoing gaps in the system and exacerbated these inequities. We need a strategic, effective, sustainable system. An ECE Coordinating Entity will make that happen.

However, an ECE Coordinating Entity is not just about providing child care for today’s workforce, it also supports the workforce of tomorrow. Montgomery County has been working on the achievement gap for well over 20 years. Because these disparities begin at a very early age, we must provide high quality early education for all our children. Not only will this help secure a pipeline of educated, skilled workers, it is simply the right thing to do.

Our Chamber has been engaged with this issue for several years now. Having been on the Montgomery Moving Forward Leadership Group, I’ve studied the literature, I’ve reviewed best practices from around the globe, I know the sheer number of resources that have been applied to this very complex issue. The way to make sustainable change is to create an ECE Coordinating entity to help guide resources, energy, and passion to solve the inequities in early care and education in the County.

Please approve Bill 42-21.

Thank you for your consideration.

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