

**Remarks in support of Montgomery County Council Bill 42-21 Early Care
and Education Coordinating Entity, public hearing
Nov. 30, 1:30 pm.**

Good afternoon, Council President Hucker, Vice President Alborno, and members of the County Council. I want to start by saying thank you Council Vice President Alborno, and Councilmembers Navarro and Rice for taking the lead on this groundbreaking legislation, and thanks to Councilmembers Friedson, Glass, Hucker, Jawando, Katz and Riemer for their enthusiastic support. My name is Tiffany Jones and I am here as an Early Care and Education Leader/Advocate, experienced family childcare provider and small business owner as well a mother of three who has navigated the ECE system. I support this bill and the establishment of an early care and education coordinating entity. I have been a longtime advocate for a mixed delivery system that supports family childcare providers, childcare centers, nonprofit partners, as well as other public childcare options.

Having an independent Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity is an important step towards ensuring that all children in Montgomery County have access to high quality early care, giving them a solid foundation for academic and economic success later in life. Montgomery County needs a comprehensive system of early care and education, to build back the ECE sector and improve access for all. The independent public-private coordinating entity proposed in this legislation will help build a system of early care and education that will foster coordination, collaboration and cooperation.

The entity can facilitate a sustainable economic recovery and future growth by helping to identify needs and coordinate resources across the entire ECE system. The framework for this entity is based on extensive research in best practices and knowledge of other models around the country.

The elements of inclusion, independence, cross-sector representation, accountability and guardianship outlined in the legislation, will be key to the Entity's success:

- **Inclusion:** The Entity will develop clear, realistic, actionable, and measurable inclusion and racial equity goals that align with the County's racial equity and social justice strategic plan.
 - Parents and providers will have authentic voice and authority on the governing board. It is incredibly important to ensure that diverse voices representing the wide array of childcare options in the County be included in the decision-making process. It is very important that the voices of low-income community members must be heard and valued by any entity that will oversee early care and education in the County as low-income families face some of the greatest challenges obtaining high-quality care for their children. This presents very exciting possibilities for both parents of young children and family childcare providers to be an integral part of the strategic governance that has not been offered before in this space.
 - The Entity will implement effective community engagement strategies to ensure community priorities are reflected in a common agenda that all those engaged in ECE in Montgomery County will subscribe to.
- **Independence:** The Entity will have the independence necessary to leverage cross sector participation, act as a neutral convener, and actively seek and be guided by community engagement. This will enable it to have a 360 view of the Early Care and Education system.

- Cross sector representation: The Entity will have a public-private board whose members spans the system including employers, philanthropy, government, providers, and parents.
- As noted in the legislation, the Entity will have three Co-Chairs: a parent, a private sector representative, and a public sector representative.
- Accountability: The Entity will focus on the systems level and will not deliver programs or services. It will work to break down silos and create accountability tools to measure the overall success of the shared agenda and progress towards shared goals.
 - I believe that reporting and oversight of the new entity are critical to its success. The full picture of the early care and education system in our County must be seen in order to know what barriers remain and what policies and programs should be explored to address these obstacles
- Guardianship: The entity will provide accounting and transparency to meet all fiduciary responsibilities in service of a common agenda.
 - It will establish a robust process for tracking, managing, and reporting on all funds.
 - It will report on the management and allocation of funds directly to the County Council and at public board meetings.

From my perspective, the Entity will play an important role in working to ensure a baseline of quality, affordable, early care and education, so that all Montgomery County children have a strong foundation that will help us build a talent pipeline for the workforce of tomorrow. Providers will have more influence over decisions affecting ECE in Montgomery County through their role on the board of the Entity and the Entity will be able to advocate for policy positions that are important to providers and parents. With a 360 view of the ECE landscape, the entity will be able to address gaps in high quality, affordable ECE in certain communities based on historically biased systems and racial discrimination.

The pandemic exposed ongoing gaps in the ECE system and exacerbated existing inequities, highlighting wide disparities in the availability and quality of care available to families depending on where they live in the county, their race and cultural/national background, and their income level. Providers, many of whom are women of color, struggled with the additional burdens imposed by the pandemic and many providers closed and have remained closed, others are barely hanging on. This is a moment to pursue bold solutions and audacious results to transform ECE in Montgomery County! Thank you for the opportunity to share how important this Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity will be for providers and family in our County. I ask that you vote in support of Bill 42-21 and support a bright future for Montgomery County's children!

Respectfully Submitted,
 Tiffany Jones
 Owner/Family Childcare Provider
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