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Montgomery County Council

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my support for the **re-designation of the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA) as Montgomery County's Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity — favorable with amendments**. As a passionate advocate for early childhood education and a committed community member, I urge the Council to thoughtfully consider the implications of the proposed amendments.

While I understand the intent to avoid duplication and agree that the legislation can benefit from targeted revisions, the current proposed changes — specifically those restricting COA from awarding or funding grants, entering into contracts with child care providers, providing goods and services, or funding seats — would severely limit COA's ability to innovate and offer meaningful supports within our early care and education system.

I am a Family Child Care Provider and have benefited from COA's unique role in our county. I currently serve as Treasurer on the board of the Family Child Care Association of Montgomery County. Our current membership is 100 family child care educators. With funding support from COA, our association implemented a PreK mentoring program. We have 18 educators that are getting specialized mentoring to get them ready to apply for the PreK expansion grant. This mentorship program will expand the private provider seats available in our county.

I also had the opportunity to participate in COA's common agenda meetings with other stakeholders in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education. Our County has always been forward-thinking when it comes to including all the players, even Family Child Care, who are often left out of important conversations. COA is uniquely positioned to bring together all the entities that are working hard for our children, including those who are doing on-the-ground work.

As an independent nonprofit, COA is uniquely positioned to provide a 360-degree view of the ECE sector, pilot innovative ideas, and quickly fill critical gaps — efforts that are often difficult to achieve within traditional government structures. Restricting these functions would fundamentally change what COA was designed to do and diminish its potential as a **coordinating, amplifying, and gap-filling entity**.

I urge the Council to adopt the legislation **with amendments that preserve COA's ability to collaborate with providers, pilot new solutions, and serve as a true systems-level leader** for Montgomery County's youngest residents and the educators who serve them.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Nicholls

Owner and Educator at Journey Preschool

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