



Written Testimony Opposing Expedited Bill 23-25

Charo Torres, Executive Director
Latino Early Care and Education Coalition (LECEC)
July 15, 2025

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Charo Torres, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Latino Early Care and Education Coalition (LECEC). I am writing to express my strong opposition to Expedited Bill 23-25, as currently written.

LECEC is a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Spanish-speaking family child care (FCC) providers in Montgomery County. Thanks to a grant from the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA), we launched a highly impactful program to help FCC providers build the foundational skills and confidence necessary to eventually apply for the Maryland Pre-K Expansion Grant.

These providers, who live and work in low-income immigrant communities, are committed to delivering high-quality early education. However, they face significant barriers — including language, documentation, lack of access to culturally responsive training, and fear stemming from immigration status. What they don't lack is commitment. What they need is support that is accessible, culturally grounded, and delivered by people they trust.

Our program was showing measurable progress. While the providers we support are not yet eligible to apply for the Pre-K grant, they have made substantial strides and were on track with our continued guidance. We were counting on a continuation of the COA grant to maintain this momentum and help them reach full eligibility.

The current version of Expedited Bill 23-25 would prohibit COA from offering this kind of direct support — including awarding grants, entering into contracts with providers, and offering services. I believe this would be a step backward for equity and inclusion in the County.

The bill outlines that the Coordinating Entity must conduct needs assessments, identify barriers, and increase equitable access to high-quality ECE, particularly for low-income families and English language learners. But how can this be achieved without direct

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collaboration with the community organizations already doing this work — the ones who have built trust, understand the challenges, and operate on evenings and weekends to meet providers where they are?

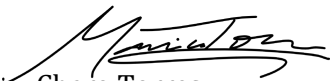
LECEC's program is a model for equity in action. We offer linguistically and culturally responsive assistance, delivered by trusted messengers, in the timeframes our providers need. Without COA's ability to fund organizations like ours, the County will lose a vital bridge to the providers it aims to uplift — and the trust we've built over years will be difficult to restore.

The Children's Opportunity Alliance is doing what no county agency has done before — reaching providers who have been invisible in the system for too long. Their commitment to equity is not just words — it's action. And we applaud their work. Without COA's ability to fund organizations like ours, the County will lose a vital bridge to the providers it aims to uplift — and the trust we've built over years will be difficult to restore.

On behalf of the dedicated family child care providers we serve, I respectfully urge the Council to amend the bill to preserve the ability of the Coordinating Entity to fund and collaborate with grassroots organizations that directly support underrepresented providers.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to equity in early care and education.

Sincerely,



Charo Torres

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