



## Executive Brief:

# A Summary of Findings on Barriers, Supports and Costs Associated with Family Child Care Participation in Pre-K Expansion Requirements Under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

June 2024

Report by  
Dr. Sondeania Johnson  
Dr. Christopher Swanson  
Desiree Taylor  
Tiffani Martin  
Jon Farley  
Bill Hudson



Commissioned by the Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland

With funding from the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood and private funders



# Overview

Maryland has implemented a historic focus on early childhood with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This legislation has created an unprecedented opportunity to expand preschool to all of the state's three- and four-year-old children through a mixed-delivery system across the continuum of public, center, and family child care (FCC) providers.

While the "Blueprint" brought many positive opportunities, including funding, for all early care and education professionals, it increased requirements for participation in Pre-K expansion grants. To understand the potential barriers in meeting the requirements under Blueprint, and potential unintended consequences from implementation, the Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland commissioned this study. Using a mixed method research design, a survey sample of 294 responses were collected in English and Spanish with 171 fully completed from FCC providers across the state, accompanied by 25 focus group interviews and 8 individual cost-profile constructed models.

What follows is a summary of high-level findings and 7 key recommendations. For a full review of background research, methodology, and analysis, please see the full report.

---

## Key Findings

Approximately 44.2% of survey respondents indicated a risk of closing in the next three years, adding to the continuing downward trend line in Maryland's FCC supply which disproportionately impacts children of color, those with developmental differences, those who are economically disadvantaged and those who live in rural areas more than other groups.

### **Top 3 Cited Reasons for Leaving**

- 1. Burn Out**
- 2. New/Additional Requirements**
- 3. FCC Not Financially Viable**

The theme of burden: having too many competing demands for typically one owner/operator to reasonably perform kept emerging across survey and focus group responses, with current support systems not effectively meeting the needs of the provider community.

***Only 10% of the FCC field met the Maryland EXCELS criteria for participation in Pre-K expansion, let alone remaining requirements around teacher credentials and certification – while already working an average of 65 hours per week for a pre-tax wage of \$14.10/hour – so there was little time or ability to invest.***

Cost-models based on interviews and analyzed data reveal providers earning less than minimum wage and functioning below defined guidelines of poverty and Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE). None of the provider interviewed provide benefits to themselves or employees. Even for those providers that qualified for participation in Pre-K expansion, it would be economically disadvantageous to do so given the shifting demographic of providers requiring more bi-lingual resources and materials. Additionally, there is a trust and information gap that exists between providers and the agencies and support systems meant to serve them, leading to wide-spread misinformation.

The continued loss of FCC programs not only threatens the aims of Pre-K expansion, but also the supply of infant and toddler care which impact's Maryland's ability to return employees to the workforce, particularly women, where the state lags behind its peers.



---

# Recommendations

## A set of seven recommendations are suggested for implementation to address these challenges:

- 1. Develop a continuum-wide definition by program-type of the unique benefits and focus of each type of child care/early education program within Maryland’s mixed delivery system:** to enable a strong recommendation system to better match a child with a specific program type, focusing on inherent strengths and unique attributes of each program.
- 2. Implement a “Provider Hub+ Model:”** to reduce the burden felt by FCC providers, build upon the concept of “Hubs” defined in the recent Maryland House Bill 1441 to establish the type of robust and comprehensive support system public schools benefit from by being within a Local School System, by offering centralized logistical operational and managerial support, while also addressing challenges and costs around the need for substitute pools, shared services to lower expenses, bulk vendor service agreements, and to improve communication and coordination with entities like MSDE, school-systems, and the network of third-party technical assistance providers.
- 3. Fund FCC by the slot with guaranteed payments:** to address the financial uncertainties that come from the high-level of under-enrollment when children frequently transition and/or have non-uniform start dates as is typical in K-12. Payment by the slot allows these private businesses to have greater revenue planning in considering incurred expenses when thinking about investment toward meeting Blueprint requirements.
- 4. Create a managed enrollment system:** to better mitigate under-enrollment and improve program matches based on individual child needs across the entire continuum of Maryland’s early care and education delivery system. A universal enrollment system that allows all providers, resource and referral entities, and consumers to see real-time vacancies and strengths of a given program for a recommended “child profile” would help inform consumer choice and reduce both child recruitment but also mismatched placements that harm child progress.
- 5. Establish alternative competency professional pathways:** to address the realities of the field’s current readiness to obtain degrees based on prerequisite educational levels, available time and expense, and perceived return on investment. Given the current wage gap between FCC and local school systems and the staffing shortages in the latter, mandating degrees for all FCC may in fact exacerbate the FCC supply

shortage as those providers find higher wages with benefits and less intensity working in the public schools while simultaneously pushing out experienced FCC providers who are towards the end of their careers and don't see the benefit of investing in education when weighed against the financial and personal costs.

**6. Establish professional supports:** to address perceptions from providers of discrepancies between their professional standing and their K-12 colleagues, through models such as local business discount programs and establishing paid employee benefit pools.

**7. Create a culture shift:** to address the trust deficit and communication gaps, a systemic culture shift needs to occur that focuses on relationship building versus more informational sharing. Strategies such as creating opportunities for authentic engagement between providers and policy-makers and other key stakeholders; ensuring representation of perspectives across initiatives prior to decision-making; and creating forums for leadership to have frank and open dialogue with stakeholders to dispel factual inaccuracies that take root amongst the provider community are critical to creating an effective, collaborative, and impactful early childhood system in Maryland.



# About the Authors

## FAMILY CHILD CARE ALLIANCE OF MARYLAND

### **Dr. Sondeania Johnson**

Dr. Sondeania Johnson is an Early Childhood Instructional Coach, Mentor, Classroom observer, and trainer with 20 years of experience in Early Childhood Education. Dr. Johnson holds a Bachelor's degree from Coppin State University, a Masters degree from Towson University and a Doctorate from Walden University.

Sondeania has served in the capacity as a Head Start educator, site director, school age director, before and after care director, Head Start and Family Child Care instructional coach, Pre-K Class observer and Board member for various non-profit organizations.

Dr. Johnson specializes in working with early childhood programs and non-profit organizations and is committed to helping educators and school leaders find innovative ways to transform teaching and learning for positive student outcomes. Dr. Johnson has a passion for children and families and emphasizes the importance of family engagement through research and advocacy. During her spare time, she enjoys dining, creating party favors, and watching sports.

### **Desiree Taylor**

As an instructional coach at The Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland, Desiree Taylor supports educators and business owners in their pursuit of providing high-quality pre-k instruction. Additionally, she collaborates with other stakeholders on projects that will move the education industry forward.

Desiree holds a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from Towson University and is a graduate student pursuing a Master's of Education and certification in Instructional Technology from the University of Maryland. Desiree has almost 20 years of experience as a classroom teacher in both public and private schools. Additionally, she has over 10 years of experience as a child care director and four years of experience as a child care business owner. She joined The Family Child Care Alliance in 2022.

Desiree is a Maryland State Department of Education certified teacher for pre-k to third grade. She also holds multiple certifications in early childhood education including Child Care Administration and CLASS 2nd Edition Observer Pre-K-3rd certification.

Outside of work, Desiree enjoys baking, decorating, gardening, and spending time with family and friends.



## **Tiffani Martin**

Tiffani Martin is a native Baltimorean and a proud graduate of the Baltimore City Public School System. She began her journey toward becoming a competent, curious and reflective educator over 17 years ago. In her work supporting educators, she coaches them to become knowledgeable, skilled and cogent advocates for each and every child. Before joining the Literacy Lab in 2019, where she supports AmeriCorps tutors to deliver Reading Corp literacy interventions to K-3 students throughout Baltimore City Public Schools, she worked as Clinical Faculty with Urban Teachers for Johns Hopkins University.

Tiffani taught early childhood grades (Pre-K thru 2nd grade) before expanding her work with children into afterschool programming, particularly through curriculum development and enrichment. Her specific areas of professional interest are early childhood literacy, educator development and community activism.

Tiffani holds a B.S. in Business (Marketing) from the University of Maryland College Park and completed her M.A.T. in Elementary Education from Trinity (Washington) University.

## **Bill Hudson**

Bill Hudson is the Executive Director of the Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland, an organization he co-founded in 2019 with a group of Maryland family child care providers and advocates. He also serves as the Project Manager for the Alliance's ASPIRE Pre-K program which is building a ground-breaking, statewide network of high-quality Pre-K programs in family child care homes. Started in 2020, the ASPIRE PreK program has grown from an idea to a program with over seventy participating family child care educators in seventeen of Maryland's twenty three counties, supported by a staff of thirteen. In 2020, Bill also served as the co-chair of the Maryland Family Child Care Task Force, sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education. Prior to joining the Alliance, he served as the Chief Executive Officer for the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), the only national membership/trade organization developed solely to advancing the field of family child care. In addition to supporting the association's members, Bill worked to advance the larger Early Care and Education field by serving on the core task force of NAYEC's Power to the Profession initiative, a national collaborative effort to re-imagine the early childhood workforce. He also served on the National Birth to Age 8 Workforce committee and the Early Care and Education Innovation Collaborative, both sponsored by the National Academy of Medicine. Prior to his career shift to early childhood education, Bill spent twenty years in various leadership positions within public libraries, finishing his library career as the director of one of Pennsylvania's largest county library systems. He has a Bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and lives in Reston, VA.

## C-IMPACT

### **Dr. Chris Swanson**

Dr. Chris Swanson, formerly an Associate Research Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Education, co-founded both the IDEALS Institute and C-IMPACT, where he currently serves as Executive Director. With 25 years in education, Swanson has been pivotal in developing the Maryland EXCELS quality rating system, chairing the Maryland Competency Workforce Committee, creating the Maryland Accreditation reliability model, and contributing significantly to early childhood, special education, and K-12 policy, research, training, and implementation at all government levels.

Before his academic career, Swanson held leadership roles as principal and national director of professional development at the online charter school operator, Connection Academy. He also served as a central office administrator and classroom teacher in Baltimore County Public Schools, specializing in autism, intellectual and behavioral challenges, and literacy. Swanson began his career at St. Elizabeth, a nonpublic school, working with students aged 14-21 with profound developmental differences.

Swanson earned Bachelor's degrees in English and education with a minor in journalism from UMBC, and holds a Master's of Science in Special Education and a Doctorate from Johns Hopkins University. His extensive background blends practical experience with a strong dedication to advancing educational research and policy.

### **Jon Farley**

Jon Farley previously served as COO at the IDEALS Institute at Johns Hopkins University. In 2023, he co-founded C-IMPACT with Dr. Swanson, using his expertise to help startups scale revenue and impact while ensuring operational stability. With a background as an analyst, operations leader in private and non-profit sectors, and a former Infantry Officer in the United States Marine Corps, Farley brings a unique perspective to overcoming organizational challenges. He emphasizes the power of data analysis for strategic direction and underscores team engagement in driving successful change.

Farley is adept at structuring rapid growth and cultivating high-performing teams, guiding projects from strategic planning through execution to achieve cost reduction, increased profitability, and sustainable growth. His prior roles include crime and intelligence analyst at the Annapolis Police Department, and managerial positions at COMSORT (later acquired by Merck & Co. Inc.) and Community Analytics. Farley holds a Bachelor's of Arts in Administration of Justice from Pennsylvania State University and employs a leadership style rooted in Serving Leadership principles, logistical expertise, and a person-centered approach to enhance organizational excellence.

## ABOUT C-IMPACT



C-IMPACT is a Maryland-based nonprofit organization dedicated to dismantling silos across human services.

We approach systems change uniquely to foster a more integrated human service system at both micro

and macro levels. Too often sectors such as education and care, physical and mental health, and social public services, and employment operate in isolation, at times even counter-productively, despite serving the same individuals. We view the world through an ecological lens, and know we can get better outcomes for people when supports are coordinated, cross-sector, and locally led.

Our strategy to achieve this involves building a coalition of cross-sector community-based organizations. At the micro level, we unite mission-aligned nonprofits, starting with community-based organizations, and assist them in securing resources for scalable solutions. We support these organizations in adopting collective impact approaches to collaborate effectively with others across sectors, thereby improving outcomes and bolstering their capacity to pursue larger funding opportunities, ensuring sustainability.

On a macro level, we aim to unite independent nonprofits into a cohesive community with a stronger collective voice. This unity empowers them to advocate for policy changes based on their frontline experiences in the communities they serve, addressing the core issues of their missions. Currently, a significant funding disparity exists where a small percentage of nonprofits control the majority of funding. We seek to rectify this by democratizing access to essential infrastructure, expertise, and support systems that larger organizations typically enjoy. This approach enables all nonprofits to better serve their communities and contribute to a more effective human service system.

For more information, please visit [www.c-impactnow.org](http://www.c-impactnow.org) or contact us at [cswanson@c-impactnow.org](mailto:cswanson@c-impactnow.org).



## ABOUT THE FAMILY CHILD CARE ALLIANCE OF MARYLAND

The Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland is a collaborative network of national, state, and local partners working to advance the field of family child care for the benefit of providers, children, families, local communities, and the State of Maryland.



## ABOUT ALLIANCE'S ASPIRE PROGRAM

The ASPIRE program is designed to make it easier for qualified\* family child care (FCC) providers across Maryland to participate in Maryland's publicly funded PreK program. We believe a FCC home is a GREAT place for three and four-year-olds to get ready for kindergarten. (\*You have a four-year degree and certification by the state to teach PreK, or you have a four-year degree and are willing to take additional steps to become certified.)