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NAFCC Statement on Universal PreK Expansion in Maryland

As Universal Pre-Kindergarten (PreK) [continues to expand across Maryland](#), the [National Association for Family Child Care](#) (NAFCC), alongside the [Maryland State Family Child Association](#), the [Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland](#), the [Latino Association of Family Child Care Inc.](#), and family child care leaders across the state, applauds efforts to expand access to early learning and urges policymakers, county leaders, and school districts to ensure the intentional and meaningful inclusion of family child care (FCC) programs within publicly funded PreK systems.

Family child care educators are a vital part of Maryland's early learning landscape, representing 61.2 percent of the [state's child care capacity](#). FCC programs provide stable, community-based care, serve mixed-age groups, offer flexible hours that meet the needs of working families, and maintain long-standing, trusted relationships with children and parents. As Universal PreK expands at the county and district level, it is critical that these programs are not unintentionally displaced or excluded. Without intentional inclusion, Universal PreK expansion risks eliminating enrollment opportunities for three- and four-year-olds in family child care settings. For many FCC programs, serving this age group is essential to financial stability. Excluding family child care threatens program sustainability, reduces parental choice, and limits access to care, particularly in communities where center-based options are limited or unavailable.

NAFCC encourages Universal PreK implementation strategies that:

- Explicitly include family child care programs as eligible PreK providers
- Provide wraparound services and peer mentoring opportunities to support family child care programs and the children in their programs.
- Ensure equitable funding and reimbursement structures for FCC educators, including payment rates that reflect the actual cost of providing care.
- Allow FCC programs to continue serving mixed-age groups without penalty, preserving capacity for other aged children
- Recognize family child care as a high-quality, community-based option for PreK delivery by adopting equitable quality measures for home-based care, including NAFCC Accreditation.

Universal PreK can and should expand access to early learning without destabilizing the existing child care infrastructure that families rely on. Including family child care strengthens the system, supports workforce stability, and preserves parental choice.

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NAFCC remains committed to working with Maryland leaders to ensure that Universal PreK policies reflect the realities of family child care and support a strong, inclusive early learning system for all children and families.

Sincerely,
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