



Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School

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Testimony Concerning SB 0533
Education - Teacher Certification - Montessori Schools
Submitted to Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair

February 18, 2020

Position: Support

Montessori Schools of Maryland (MSM) strongly supports SB 0533. There are six public Montessori schools in Maryland: three public charter schools in Frederick County and Baltimore City, and three public Montessori magnet schools in Prince George's County. These schools serve over 2,125 children and carry significant wait lists. Our school, Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School currently has 1065 applicants for the 2020-2021 school year with three weeks left for families to apply. Montessori schools have served as strong contributors to Maryland's public-school system and have produced strong academic results. Moreover, these schools provide additional educational options for families. This bill will create a much needed pathway to state teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers which will, in turn increase access to high quality authentic Montessori programs for children from all backgrounds throughout our state.

Currently, Maryland's certification process does not recognize the Montessori credential as part of a pathway to state certification and finding qualified teachers who are Montessori credentialed and meet Maryland's teaching certification requirements remains a challenge for many Montessori schools; the pipeline for these teachers is significantly strained in the public sector due to the double certification requirement. As such, we hire non-Montessori trained teachers which puts them in a learning environment for which they are not properly prepared. Just as student progress would suffer if a school placed an English teacher in a math classroom, so it creates issues for student learning to place a non-Montessori trained teacher in a Montessori classroom. Both the teachers and the students are placed in situations that compromise the learning environment.

All students deserve to have highly qualified teachers in their classrooms. Montessori teacher preparation entails a rigorous graduate level course of study that covers child-development, curriculum and level specific subject matter, observation and assessment, supports for learning differences and culturally responsive teaching in addition to a robust student teaching component. This bill would merely expand certification requirements to include these already highly qualified teaching professionals.

Because there is currently no path to state certification for Montessori credential holders, the public Montessori programs in Maryland, including Carroll Creek, have been forced to hire non-Montessori trained teachers who are state certified and then pay for them to take Montessori training while they are teaching. This creates a number of obstacles which short-change our students and our teachers:

- We have used limited funds from our budget to pay for the Montessori training needed
- We have spent significant personnel resources on coaching and supporting teachers, working in an environment they are unprepared for,
- Montessori training is rigorous graduate level work and it is taxing for our teachers to spend their first 2 years in a Montessori school teaching as well as doing rigorous coursework after school,
- Although Frederick County Public Schools is now recognizing Montessori certification classes for a small portion of the teacher licensing renewal process, but does not fully recognize the number of hours teachers have spent in gaining their certification.

Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School is dedicated to providing children from age three through eighth grade with an exceptional Montessori education. We were the first school to reach a level 8 on the American Montessori Society Pathway to Accreditation. One of the key requirements of the Pathway is ensuring teachers in each classroom hold a credential from an American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association Montessori International (AMI) affiliated or MACTE accredited teacher education program.

This bill aligns with existing MSDE requirements that Montessori schools have Montessori trained teachers.

I urge a positive report on SB 0533. Thank you for your consideration.

Marilyn Horan,


Principal,
Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School