

Montessori Schools of Maryland

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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. 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, our public Montessori programs often have to hire non-Montessori trained teachers which means we are actually putting teachers 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.

We believe that all of our schools need highly qualified teachers in our 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, public Montessori programs 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:

- The schools need to use limited funds from their budget to pay for the Montessori training needed
- Administration has to spend 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 teachers to spend their first 2 years in a Montessori school teaching as well as doing rigorous coursework after school,
- Once teachers attain their Montessori credential they do not receive any bump on the pay scale, which, along with the additional preparation needed, disincentivizes recruitment as individuals must undertake the work of becoming Montessori certified with no additional reward.

Montessori Schools of Maryland is a non-profit corporation formed in the State of Maryland dedicated to furthering the educational objectives, methods and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. We represent some seventy public, charter and independent/private Montessori schools. The Maryland State Department of Education worked with MSM several years ago to outline parameters for Montessori schools and MSM works collaboratively with MSDE as an approved Validating Organization to verify whether or not schools are meeting those parameters. One of the key requirements is having teachers in each classroom who hold a credential from an American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association Montessori International (AMI) affiliated or MACTE accredited teacher education program. So in addition to creating a much needed pathway for state certification of Montessori teachers, this bill aligns with existing MSDE requirements that Montessori schools have Montessori trained teachers.

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

Nancy Anselm

Board President
Montessori Schools of Maryland

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