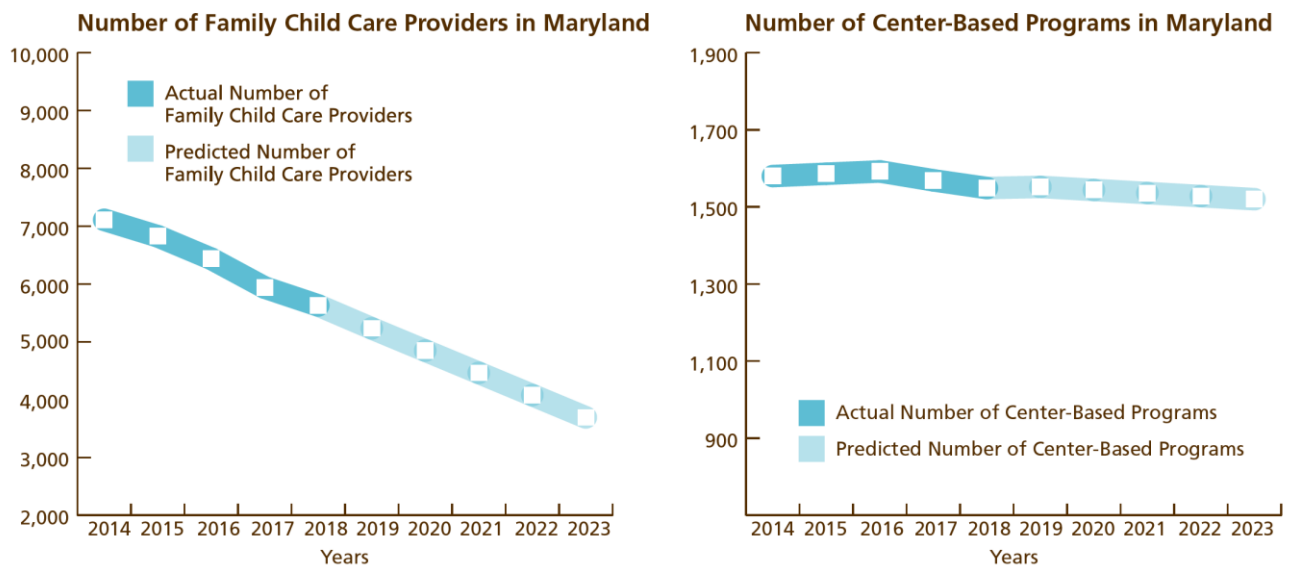




Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee  
 Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
 General Assembly of Maryland  
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 Annapolis, MD 21401  
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Feb 17, 2020

## How many child care providers will there be in Maryland in the future?



Children in the 0-4 age group are projected to **increase by about 15.8%** from 2019 to 2023. Meanwhile the number of licensed family care providers is projected to **decrease by 29%** while the number of child care centers is projected to **decrease by 2%**. -Trends in Child Care 2019, p.3, Maryland Family Network

### **SB1000/HB1300 Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation**

Dear Senator Pinsky,

I write to express my opposition to SB1000/HB1300. I want to be clear that I am fully supportive of the State's efforts to put more funding into school facilities with SB1/HB1, as well as the portions of SB1000/HB1300 which would increase teacher pay and provide more planning and professional development supports that teachers need to be successful. I have a son in public school and, while I have been very happy with his teachers, I can tell that there is

a lot of pressure on them and I see a strong need for more resources to address burnout and encourage more teachers to enter and remain in the profession. I am concerned however, that this bill doubles down on failed accountability measures (testing) and does too little to encourage teachers and schools to focus on our children's social-emotional and physical needs. In fact, I used to be a Maryland public elementary school teacher and I left the profession for this very reason. I now see it negatively impacting my son's daily experience in public middle school, which he describes as torture.

For the past 15 years, I have been involved in child care and early childhood development as both a parent and then as the president of Rock Spring Children's Center. Rock Spring is a nonprofit child care & preschool facility that attempts to meet the needs of the families and children in our community with spots for 176 infants through pre-k children. The policy issues we face are complex and are rarely anyone's primary area of focus. Child care and early childhood education are not typical areas of expertise for school principals, for school system administrators, for our Board of Education members, or for many of our decisionmakers. Research on these issues is far from settled with conflicting findings on many important factors.<sup>1</sup>

An important issue that is not widely understood is that we have a child care crisis that has been building for years and that we have no comprehensive plan to fix. You can see from the chart at the top of my testimony that Maryland has had sharp declines in the number of licensed family child care providers. Behind the more moderate declining trend in the numbers of licensed center based programs are alarming warning signs – an aging group of providers and staff anxiously hoping to just make it to retirement, child care businesses struggling to make their budgets work, staff shortages with a lack of younger people entering the field, and a sense that those of us who work in child care need to be making backup plans for alternate livelihoods.

The increase to Maryland's minimum wage is significantly increasing the costs for many programs across the state and parents aren't able to absorb the necessary tuition increases. Increases to the state's child care subsidy program still aren't enough to fully cover the costs of quality child care and only help those families at the bottom range of the income scale. There seems to be a shortfall projected for the State's child care subsidy funding and this is a repeating pattern that makes it difficult for child care programs and parents to rely on it.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, the National Academies of Science report, "Transforming Our Work Force," acknowledging that "existing research on the relationship between the education level of educators and the quality of instruction or children's learning and development is inconclusive." <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/19401/transforming-the-workforce-for-children-birth-through-age-8-a> p.434. Thus, requiring higher level degrees that can double the cost of care seems a dubious proposition when parents cannot even afford the current cost of care.

As a former representative of child care providers in both elected and appointed capacities, I have testified regularly about the critical need for more state funding to better support parental needs for quality child care, to bolster & expand child care businesses, and to improve the wages of child care workers. The cost of care continues to increase beyond the ability of most Maryland families to pay it. This hurts Maryland's economy and tax base, exacerbating the inequalities that SB1000/HB1300 is attempting to address.

The Commission recognized some of these issues in its interim report in the following excerpts:

**Policy Area 1**  
Early Childhood Education

As the Commission assessed the present state of preK-12 in Maryland, perhaps its greatest concern is the unacceptably large achievement gaps among students based on income and race, as well as other characteristics. **The Commission came to understand that a major source of the problem is the deep disparity in family income that affects the early development of children.**

\* \* \*

As the Commission learned, unlike the United States and Maryland, many of the countries with **top-performing school systems provide free or very low-cost and very high-quality child care and early childhood education for all children before they are enrolled in elementary school.** In addition, many of these countries provide significant financial supports to a wide range of families with young children, **some providing monthly stipends for each child.**

\* \* \*

**If the Commission had a mandate to address these problems at their root, it would have made recommendations that went far beyond its charge to address issues of education policy. But it did not. In keeping with its charge, the Commission has chosen to make recommendations that, among other things, would greatly expand access to high-quality, full-day early childhood education.**

Maryland Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education, Interim Report, January 2019, p.31 (highlights added)

It is critical that we recognize, as the Commission stated, that income inequality is a major **cause** of disparity issues that exist in school and persist later in life. These disparities in school are a **symptom** of income inequality. Testing is the primary method we have used to monitor these disparities and endeavor to bring **accountability** for improvements. Quality educational environments can mitigate the **symptoms**, but they aren't geared to solving the **cause**. The intense focus on accountability measures means that we are even a further step

away from making real progress as the focus of our schools becomes the scores on the tests. This is a terribly inefficient way to solve a problem.

Unfortunately, this paradigm has existed in one form or another for decades in our school system. It hasn't gotten us the results we desire, but now we want to expand it down to even younger children. It doesn't account for our children's time for play. It doesn't account for the importance of the relationships teachers and caregivers form with our children and families. It doesn't account for social-emotional development. It doesn't account for our children's joy or happiness.

Supporting quality child care, on the other hand, is a much more direct and efficient way to impact some of the roots of the income inequality problem. Child care allows families to work and/or improve their education or training. Child care ensures children are insulated from many of the negative impacts of the lack of resources through the availability of consistent, quality care environments during critical periods of development. This is why the economic research into this issue shows a 13% Return on Investment for money spent to support birth to 5 programs.<sup>2</sup> I have heard some of our education officials use this research to support the argument for the type of 6.5 hour per day, 180 days per year pre-K programs that are in this bill. However, this is a misapplication of the economic research.

I've written to and talked with many of the decisionmakers throughout this process about the specific concerns with this pre-k plan centering around three important topics of content, cost and control.<sup>3</sup> They can best be summarized as:

- a. Content – taking the same developmentally inappropriate practices that aren't working for our kindergarten and elementary school children and pushing them down to even younger children; academic testing of 3 and 4-year-olds; shifting teacher focus away from engagement with children and towards testing and results; designing programs to match a public-school day rather than a parent's work day.
- b. Cost/Reimbursement – reimbursement rates in both the Pre-K Expansion plan and proposed Universal Pre-K plan that do not come close to paying what child care actually costs; reimbursement rates that have been cut from one year to the next, showing that such funding is an unreliable source around which to build a

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<sup>2</sup>“Research shows high-quality, birth-to-five early childhood education provides a higher rate of return than preschool alone.” [www.heckmanquation.org](http://www.heckmanquation.org)

<sup>3</sup> While several provider representatives worked to raise these issues with the Kirwan Commission, our concerns weren't taken seriously, and we were instead repeatedly told that “this is happening and either get on board or get left behind.” In fact, no research was done into the impact the pre-k recommendations would have on Maryland's existing child care programs.

business; extensive delays in getting reimbursements to providers; requirements to hire degreed teachers (a workforce that does not exist in the numbers that would be needed) and pay them the same as public school teachers.

- c. Control – puts control with the school system where substantive experience and training in child care and early education is limited or non-existent; accountability standards are rigid and not reflective of reality and the diversity of approaches; decisions being made by people who have little to no understanding of how to run a business; businesses lose the needed flexibility to be sustainable and worth doing.

While there were some minor improvements on some of these issues in the final bill, the major issues remain unaddressed. For example, on content, the focus remains a 6.5 hour day, 180 days a year, that is unreflective of the developmental needs of 3 and 4 year old children and the workday of parents using busses, facilities & school procedures that were not designed for children that young.

On cost, we can look to DC to see how their rather well funded pre-k program decimated their existing child care programs, made the cost of infant & toddler care skyrocket with the loss of 4 year olds from the system<sup>4</sup> and required massive supplemental spending legislation (\$500 million over 10 years) that they have not yet been able to figure out how to fund (only \$15million of the projected \$30-\$50 million needed this year).<sup>5</sup> MD would be committing all available resources to the Kirwan recommendations with no way to correct the impact to child care programs with a large new spending bill in the coming years.

As to control, this bill builds heavily upon the dysfunctional foundation of MSDE administration. We documented this recently in a hearing in front of the AELR Committee regarding proposed regulations. There is a lack of trust between child care providers and MSDE that makes it hard to form the type of partnership needed to make this pre-k scheme work for all community based child care providers. The bill itself seems geared towards shifting pre-k into the public schools and simply using existing child care providers until this can be accomplished.

This bill represents a major commitment of Maryland's resources for the next decade to a course of action we know to be flawed in significant, foundational ways and that does not

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<sup>4</sup> The **average** cost of infant care is now \$24,243. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/DC>. See also [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/parents-pay-extra-to-find-child-care-in-the-right-place-at-the-right-time/2016/12/18/7450a03c-c3a3-11e6-9578-0054287507db\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/parents-pay-extra-to-find-child-care-in-the-right-place-at-the-right-time/2016/12/18/7450a03c-c3a3-11e6-9578-0054287507db_story.html)).

<sup>5</sup> See <https://wamu.org/story/18/11/19/d-c-looks-for-ways-to-fund-ambitious-early-childhood-program/> & <https://dcactionforchildren.org/blog/significant-birth-three-funding-passes-dc-council>.

comprehensively address the needs of our youngest children and their families. While it may make the statement that our public education system is a top priority, it also makes a statement that we do not care about child care programs or the people who, for decades, have served as the biggest subsidy to our system by working at low wages to meet the needs of our children and families. It says that if you aren't willing or able to get a degree to do the same job you have been doing (and doing successfully), then you will be cast aside. It says that if you aren't willing to restructure your programs to a format you do not believe is the best for kids or families, then you will not be able to continue operating. It says that although you've dedicated your life to children and families, we just don't care about you.

As a result, I ask that if you vote to proceed with this bill, please publicly express your concern about the child care crisis, the impact that this bill may have on it, and your commitment to proceeding on a parallel track to increase resources to families to meet their child care needs and better support the child care workers currently in the field. Please make a commitment to be mindful that we need to be planning for substantially more funding for child care subsidies and tax credits and/or some other form of large-scale financial investments in the child care industry. Please also keep in mind that any bills Maryland passes that impact child care should be adding resources rather than increasing costs or adding unfunded mandates.

I thank you so much for your dedication to our State and to our families. While I tried to be blunt in my testimony, I understand that our elected officials have to navigate a complex and competing demand for resources. Child care research and policy is a developing area with many issues that are not yet fully understood, especially from the operational perspective. But to borrow a line from a recent important speech in Congress, "If you don't know, now you know." I hope that my testimony is of use to you in your decision making.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SR", is positioned above the typed name.

Shaun M. Rose  
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