



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 4500 members working in the field of early childhood. We believe children are our most important natural resources and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

March 4, 2020

Position: Supports with **Amendments**

HB 1386

Ways and Means Committee

Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) fully supports HB 1386 and we are so grateful for Delegate Kelly's leadership, as well as advocacy in the area of child care. She is a true champion for children and families in Maryland.

Nationally there is a critical workforce shortage in child care which leads to insufficient access for parents to much needed child care programs. Maryland is also experiencing the workforce shortage in this critical need area. Critical workforce shortages impact parent's access to child care.

Insufficient child care negatively impacts not only parents, but employers, and taxpayers when families do not have the child care they need, parents' work productivity falls, resulting in costs to parents, their employers, and, ultimately, taxpayers. Insufficient child care also leads to increases in illegal, unlicensed child care.

MSCCA is concerned for children and families as the child care/early childhood workforce is in crisis. Our members have shared frustration and fear as the pool of viable candidates that are qualified as child care teachers in Maryland continues to decline. Surveys were submitted with our written testimony to provide data that supports the need to find ways to allow businesses to efficiently hire quality child care teachers and expand, not decrease or lessen, qualifications while maintaining the integrity of the current COMAR licensing regulations. MSCCA believes HB 1386 creates a way to increase access to quality programs while alleviating some barriers for child care businesses/programs.

HB 1386 amendments which would establish qualifications for Child Care Teachers in Preschool Centers and School Age Child Care Centers that allow an individual who holds degrees in early childhood education and **specified related fields of study** to qualify as a child care teacher if the individual is enrolled in an approved preservice and successfully completes within 6 months after being hired will positively impact the ability of a program to hire quality teachers efficiently. Currently there is no timeframe for approval from Office of Child Care. The changes would alleviate some of the need for Office of Child Care variances and would create a better pathway to expedient qualification process. HB 1386 would also increase access for families to child care because delays in approval of qualifications to hire staff sometimes results in classrooms remaining closed, potential candidates moving onto other opportunities and alleviates confusion in the hiring process.

Currently Child Care Teachers in Centers must hold a High School diploma, must be at least 19 years old, must hold an approved Office of Child Care 90 hour certification (45 hours of child growth and development and 45 hours of curriculum/methods and materials) or must obtain a variance from Office of Child Care for the first 45 hours in Child Development. This process to receive approval of qualifications (Professional Qualification Evaluations) or a variance from MSDE Office of Child Care Licensing Specialists can be painstakingly slow, inconsistent and has negatively impacted programs ability to hire in a timely manner. Additionally, there is no variance for age.

Aides working in Child Care Centers are required to have an additional 9 hour communication class, if they have never completed a college class. Also, centers are required to have Directors who oversee the program and they are required to have additional 45 hours of preservice for administration and depending on the size of the center, must hold a degree. All working in the field must complete annual continued approved training at 12 hours for child care teachers and directors and 6 hours annually for aides. Infant toddler teachers must hold the 90 hour certification and complete an additional 45 hour approved infant toddler approved certification to teach in an infant/toddler classroom.

Not only do the regulations require the qualifications components above, but also include all staff to have full criminal background checks, (federal, state and child abuse and neglect -3 sets) complete medical by physician every five years, a full orientation checklist required in COMAR and an Americans with Disabilities Act 3 hour training.

I share this information to convey the differences in the requirements between Child Care Centers and Registered Family child care (not kinship or relative care).

Licensed/Registered Family Child Care does not require any staffing qualifications. No high school diploma, nor 90 hours certifications, no communication class, no administration class. You can open a business in your home with up to 8 children, including up to 2 infant and toddlers and 6 preschoolers, with nothing but an orientation. Family Child Care providers are eligible for tax deductions, food and child care subsidies and liability insurance. MSCCA is unsure as to why the requirements to do the same job is viewed from a completely different lens and onerous for qualifications is squarely upon mostly small child care center businesses, yet they do not make as much money as the average Family Child Care Provider in Maryland according to Maryland Family Network's Public Policy manual. Parents deserve choices and Family Child Care is an important and excellent choice for families, but shouldn't what's best for children be the same for all providing child care? Child care centers hope the committee will recognize HB 1386 is an important, simple step to benefit a cohort that is already meeting, if not exceeding expectations with an unbalanced system of regulatory requirements.

Additionally, Public K-12 teachers are allowed to teach with a Bachelor's degree in any field to pursue, while on the job, as long as they are pursuing Maryland certification and complete all steps within a two year period. We are asking for a similar opportunity with this legislation.

Another significant factor to consider is the alignment and relationship HB 1386 begins to establish with the Kirwan Commission recommendations/Blueprint for Maryland SB 1000/HB 1300 related to teacher qualifications. The capacity and pathways for teachers must be addressed and MSCCA supports creative ways to ensure mixed, diverse delivery settings for prekindergarten.

Finally, MSCCA's goal is to address the real concerns related to workforce shortages, alleviate barriers, expand qualifications and competencies, build capacity for qualified workforce and encourage career changers to enter into early childhood field, as it is a national and state area of critical need. We believe HB 1386 is a step in the right direction.

MSCCA urges a favorable report!