



House Ways and Means Committee

*HB 513: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program - Established*

February 17, 2022

Position: **Support with Amendment**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council), Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), and The Arc Maryland work to advance the inclusion, rights, and opportunities of people with developmental disabilities. Increasing access to early care and education for Maryland’s children is critical for their development. This is particularly true for young children with disabilities who need more access and opportunity to learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities. The majority of child care providers want to support children with disabilities but need assistance, including training and coaching, to do so. Therefore, **we support efforts that build that capacity of early care and education providers.**

**Research demonstrates that classroom management, positive behavior supports, and other evidence-based interventions are effective in changing behavior – this is exactly what the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) does.** The IECMHC is an evidence-informed intervention designed to build the capacity of early childhood professionals’ ability to nurture social and emotional development in infants and young children. This is particularly important now, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Equally important is the language we use. According to the 2020 Brief, IECMHC is “intended to create fundamental shifts in early childhood professionals’ beliefs, attitudes, and practices to support more effective caregiving for all children, regardless of race, gender, class, or a myriad of other factors.” The language used to describe children should match the fundamental shift we all want to see. Therefore, we strongly recommend the following change:

On page 2, lines 27-29, AND on page 3, lines 22-24 remove “suffer from” and replace with:

(D) (1) THE DIVISION SHALL IDENTIFY INITIALLY ELIGIBLE CHILDREN WHO MAY ~~SUFFER~~ **HAVE** ~~A~~ **FROM** DEVELOPMENTAL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, OR BEHAVIORAL **ISSUES OR DISABILITY** FOR ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM.

When early care and education providers are empowered with the skills and knowledge they need, children are better supported to play, learn, and succeed together. Therefore, we support HB 513 with the change to the language noted above.

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