



Testimony Concerning HB 206
Early Childhood Education – Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools and Programs
Submitted to Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 16, 2023

Position: Support

As Maryland develops its mixed delivery system to provide children with high quality early education opportunities, it is important to ensure that a variety of settings and providers are able to participate.

Montessori education is rooted in neuroscience and nurtures children in all aspects of their development — cognitive, emotional, social, and physical. Scientific research confirms that Montessori children have an advantage not only academically, but also in social and emotional development and that Montessori education closes the achievement gap across the preschool years. *Maryland's children and families deserve to have access to early education settings that provide these kinds of transformative opportunities.*

To create a robust mixed delivery system, the needs of different provider types need to be taken into account. Family child-care, Indigenous early childhood programs, and pedagogical models such as Montessori have unique needs, and states across the country are broadening their systems to ensure families have access to a wider variety of quality programs. HB 206 amends parameters of prekindergarten funding to ensure that both public and private Montessori schools can be participating providers, thereby giving families access to Montessori education.

The amendments proposed in HB 206 bring the parameters of prekindergarten funding streams into alignment with COMAR's regulations regarding Montessori schools and with existing Maryland law regarding Montessori teacher credentials. In addition, enabling Montessori schools to be participating providers will help counties achieve the established minimum proportion of eligible private providers required in the Blueprint legislation.

Maryland's children deserve access to early education settings that will give them the strongest foundation possible for future success. Thank you for your consideration of this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy SE". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Shenk-Evans
Executive Director