

# **FINAL HB206 Montessori PreK - PreK Expansion Grant**

Uploaded by: Grace Wilson

Position: FAV



## HB206 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS – MONTESSORI SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

March 22, 2023  
COMMITTEE

### SUPPORT

Grace Wilson, Legislative & Policy Specialist (410.440.1758)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB206 Early Childhood Education – Prekindergarten Programs – Montessori Schools and Programs**. This bill alters the requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program to include operational requirements, staff certification requirements, and student-to-staff ratios for Montessori schools and programs. To be eligible for the grant, Montessori schools and programs for prekindergarten services will need to: (1) meet existing program requirements; (2) maintain a student to staff ratio of no more than 10 to one for a classroom if all of the students are younger than age five, and no more than 15 to one for a classroom if some of the students are at least age five; and (3) require classroom teachers to hold a bachelor's degree and be certified by the Association Montessori Internationale, the American Montessori Society, or the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.

In 2021, the General Assembly overrode Governor Hogan's veto of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) which significantly changes State education policy based on the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. The Blueprint law proposes a long-term phase-in of mandated increases in State and local funding for public education, increases that represent the commitment Maryland must make to fully and equitably fund a world class public education for all of Maryland's nearly one million students.

The first pillar of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) is investing in high-quality early childhood education so that all children have the opportunity to begin kindergarten ready to learn. To meet this goal, the Blueprint calls for a significant expansion of full-day prekindergarten, to be free to all low-income three- and four-year-old children and available to all other four-year-old children with fees set at a sliding scale. Additionally, the Blueprint calls for public funding for both public-school based and community-based prekindergarten programs, with all providers receiving public funding required to meet rigorous quality standards.

However, as AACPS has worked to implement this provision of the Blueprint, we have identified several barriers to a public-private delivery model of prekindergarten. These barriers include hiring qualified staff with the advanced credentials required in Blueprint, additional space in buildings (private providers are at 100% capacity in most locations with students paying tuition), the requirement to remove religious symbols, substantially increasing staff salaries, the inability of private providers to choose who to enroll, and purchasing supplies.

HB206 expands eligibility for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program created by the Blueprint to Montessori schools and programs, thus increasing the number of private prekindergarten providers who are eligible to partner with AACPS to meet the goal of a public-private delivery model of prekindergarten services for Maryland's students. Additionally, AACPS appreciates the amendments to this bill that permit larger student to staff ratios and class sizes for Montessori programs and schools that are characteristic of and essential to the Montessori method. Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on HB206.

# **Baltimore Montessori Letter of Support for HB 206**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV



March 16, 2023

**Testimony Concerning HB 206**

Early Childhood Education – Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools and Programs  
Submitted to Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Senator Brian Feldman, Chair

**Position: Support**

Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School strongly supports HB 206, which seeks to change the eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program and publicly funded prekindergarten programs to include Montessori schools and programs. This bill will allow public Montessori programs and MSDE-approved Montessori schools and programs to participate in the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program while at the same time aligning the group requirements and staff requirements with existing COMAR 13A.6 regulations already in place.

Our school serves 540 students, including 87 preK3 and preK4 students enrolled in our Children's House – our public Montessori program for early learners. Families travel from 26 different Baltimore City zip codes to attend our joyful and diverse learning community.

Montessori schools like ours have a proven track record of delivering successful educational outcomes. As a public charter school, we are part of a growing number of public Montessori programs committed to ensuring broader access to high-quality educational opportunities. Together, we can partner to provide families with a range of early learning options, which will in turn help to ensure that all children have the foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond.

The proposed amendments to the eligibility requirements will ensure that Montessori schools and programs are held to the same standards as other prekindergarten programs, while also allowing for the unique quality markers of Montessori classrooms to be maintained.

We urge a positive report on HB 206 and invite you to visit our program to experience our learning environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Meghan Rennard".

Meghan Rennard  
Executive Director

## **Barrie\_Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV

## **Testimony Concerning HB 206**

Early Childhood Education – Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools and Programs  
Submitted to Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Senator Brian Feldman, Chair

March 20, 2023

### **Position: Support**

The Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies strongly supports HB 206, which seeks to change the eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program and publicly funded prekindergarten programs to include Montessori schools and programs. This bill will allow public Montessori programs and MSDE-approved Montessori schools and programs to participate in the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program while at the same time aligning the group requirements and staff requirements with *existing* COMAR 13A.6 regulations already in place.

As proponents of early childhood education, we strongly believe that all children should have access to high-quality educational opportunities. Montessori schools have a proven track record of delivering successful educational outcomes. By including Montessori schools and programs in the state's prekindergarten programs, we will be providing families with a broader range of educational options and opportunities, which will in turn help to ensure that all children have the foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond.

In addition, enabling Montessori schools to be providers will help counties achieve the established minimum proportion of eligible private providers required.

The proposed amendments to the eligibility requirements will ensure that Montessori schools and programs are held to the same standards as other prekindergarten programs, while also allowing for the unique quality markers of Montessori classrooms to be maintained.

The Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies is a Montessori teacher education program located in Silver Spring, MD. We offer training at the Infant and Toddler, Early Childhood, Elementary I, Elementary II and Administration levels. Our program began in 1980 and we work with adult learners who will be teaching in public and private school settings annually. The Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies is affiliated by the American Montessori Society (AMS), accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE), and approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

**I urge a positive report on HB 206. Thank you for your consideration.**

Hilary Green



Director  
Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies

# **Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School Sup**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV



## *Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School*

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7215 Corporate Court, Frederick, MD 21703-8386 • (240-566-0600), fax (240-566-0601)  
<http://education.fcps.org/ccmpcs>

### **Testimony Concerning HB 206**

Early Childhood Education – Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools and Programs  
Submitted to Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Senator Brian Feldman, Chair

March 16, 2023

### **Position: Support**

I strongly support HB 206, which seeks to change the eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program and publicly funded prekindergarten programs to include Montessori schools and programs. This bill will allow public Montessori programs and MSDE-approved Montessori schools and programs to participate in the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program while at the same time aligning the group requirements and staff requirements with existing COMAR 13A.6 regulations which are currently in place.

I strongly believe that all children should have equal access to high-quality educational opportunities. Montessori schools have a proven record of delivering successful educational outcomes. Including Montessori schools in the state's funding of prekindergarten programs provides families with a broader range of educational options and opportunities, which will help ensure all children have the foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond.

The proposed amendments to the eligibility requirements ensure that funding will be provided equitably to Montessori schools and programs that meet the same standards as other prekindergarten programs that receive the same funding without altering the unique quality markers of Montessori classrooms.

**I urge a positive report on HB 206. Thank you for your consideration.**

Marilyn Horan  
Principal, Carroll Creek Public Charter Montessori School  
Frederick, MD



## **HB 206 Letter of Support to Senate\_Northcrest.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV



### **Testimony Concerning HB 206**

Early Childhood Education - Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools and Programs  
Submitted to Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
Senator Brian Feldman, Chair

March 15, 2023

### **Position: Support**

Northcrest Montessori, an MSDE-approved Montessori school located in Howard County, strongly supports HB 206, which seeks to change the eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program and publicly-funded prekindergarten programs to include Montessori schools and programs. This bill will allow public Montessori programs and MSDE-approved Montessori schools and programs to participate in the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program while concurrently aligning the group requirements and staff requirements with existing COMAR regulations already in place (13A.6).

As proponents of early childhood education, Northcrest Montessori strongly believes that all children should have access to high-quality educational opportunities. Montessori schools such as ours have proven track records of delivering successful educational outcomes. By including Montessori schools and programs in the state's prekindergarten programs, we will be providing families with a broader range of educational options and opportunities, which will in turn help to ensure that all children have the foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond. Additionally, enabling Montessori schools to be providers will help counties achieve the established minimum proportion of eligible private providers required.

The proposed amendments to the eligibility requirements will ensure that Montessori schools and programs are held to the same standards as other prekindergarten programs, while also allowing for the unique quality components of Montessori classrooms to be maintained.

We urge a positive report on HB 206. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kavitha Mehta  
Founder & Head of School

# **MPPI HB 206 Favorable\_Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV



**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, appearing to read "Wendy SE", written over a horizontal line.

Wendy Shenk-Evans  
Executive Director

# **MSCCA Support for HB 206\_Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV



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

## **Maryland State Child Care Association**

2810 Carrollton Road  
Annapolis, Md. 21403  
Phone: (410) 820-9196  
Email: [info@mscca.org](mailto:info@mscca.org)  
[www.mscca.org](http://www.mscca.org)

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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 5000 members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. 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 15, 2023  
Testimony Concerning HB 206  
Education-Teacher Certification-Montessori Schools  
Submitted Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Chair: Senator Brian Feldman

### **Position:** Support

MSCCA enthusiastically supports HB 206 and many thanks to Delegate Ivey for championing this important legislation. MSCCA is proud to have numerous Montessori programs as members and highly respects the important child development and curriculum standards Montessori training provides.

MSCCA is very active on and appointed by the Governor's office to many councils and committees including the State Early Childhood Advisory Council, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Framework Committee, Early Childhood Research Advisory Council, and the National Governor's Association/Council for Chief State School Officers Maryland team focusing on alternative pathways, teacher qualifications and competencies in early childhood education workforce.

HB 206 recognizes the numerous Montessori certifications as competencies for equivalencies for Maryland certification as staff credentials in public prekindergarten. The legislation aligns with best practices in COMAR for student to staff ratios. Montessori group size = up to 30 in COMAR. A typical Montessori class would have 8 - 10 three-year olds, 8 - 10 four-year olds, and 8 - 10 five-year-olds. Staffing = 1:15 with one adult being Montessori credentialed. The Montessori ratios have proven to be safe, as well as proven highly successful in kindergarten readiness outcomes.

The Accountability and Implementation Board's final report reference Pillar 1 high quality standards to receive public prekindergarten to include guidance which recommends alternative certification pathways for teachers in prekindergarten including stackable credentials/equivalencies. Currently, according to MSDE, if a teacher is teaching in a Montessori program and has Montessori certification by AMI, AMS, or MACTE, and the program also meets the other grant requirements, then they can apply for public Pre-k grant. HB 206 seeks to solidify the alternative equivalencies in law.

Maryland Readiness data clearly shows the positive success of non-public nursery schools to prepare children for kindergarten. Montessori schools' pedagogical approach should be a viable alternative in full format from the traditional education model and available for all children of all socio-economic backgrounds.

Our country is facing a critical workforce shortage of educators, especially in early childhood settings. We should embrace opportunities to expand and to support alternatives pathways with proven competencies/equivalencies. Montessori trained teachers ensure that all children are well served and that their philosophy and implementation of Montessori approved curriculum, which includes age-specific groupings, enriches a child's classroom experience in ways that not only prepare them for their educational career, but for life. 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

MSCCA believes that all schools need highly qualified teachers in our classrooms and staff to student ratios that yield best outcomes for success. HB 206 speaks to solidify and strengthen the equivalencies and alternative pathways for teacher certification in Maryland and ensure the ratios meet or exceed the state standards.

MSCCA fully supports HB 206 which reinforces the alternative pathways and equivalencies for eligible prekindergarten providers which is necessary for a true, equitable mixed delivery system the Blueprint for Maryland aspires to achieve.

We support **HB 206** and encourage a favorable report.

# **MSM support of HB 206 Senate version.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kavitha Mehta

Position: FAV



# Montessori Schools of Maryland

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7 Chautaugua Road  
Arnold, MD 21012  
nancypanselm@gmail.com



Testimony Concerning HB 206

Early Childhood Education - Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools and Programs

Submitted to Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair

March 15, 2023

## **Position: Support**

Montessori Schools of Maryland (MSM) strongly supports HB 206, which seeks to change the eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program and publicly funded prekindergarten programs to include Montessori schools and programs. This bill will allow public Montessori programs and MSDE-approved Montessori schools and programs to participate in the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program while at the same time aligning the group requirements and staff requirements with *existing* COMAR 13A.6 regulations already in place.

As proponents of early childhood education, we strongly believe that all children should have access to high-quality educational opportunities. Montessori schools have a proven track record of delivering successful educational outcomes. By including Montessori schools and programs in the state's prekindergarten programs, we will be providing families with a broader range of educational options and opportunities, which will in turn help to ensure that all children have the foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond.

In addition, enabling Montessori schools to be providers will help counties achieve the established minimum proportion of eligible private providers required.

The proposed amendments to the eligibility requirements will ensure that Montessori schools and programs are held to the same standards as other prekindergarten programs, while also allowing for the unique quality markers of Montessori classrooms to be maintained.

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 over 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.



**We urge a positive report on HB 206. Thank you for your consideration.**

Nancy Anselm

Board President  
Montessori Schools of Maryland

[www.montessorimd.org](http://www.montessorimd.org)

# **XHB206\_MSEA\_Lamb\_INFO.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: INFO

**Informational Testimony regarding House Bill 206  
Early Childhood Education – Prekindergarten Programs – Montessori  
Schools and Programs**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
March 22, 2023**

**Lauren Lamb  
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on House Bill 206, which would alter the eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program and publicly funded prekindergarten programs to include certain operational requirements, classroom personnel credentials, and student-to-classroom personnel ratios for Montessori schools and programs.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program (PEGP) is intended to increase capacity for high-quality early childhood education services throughout the state. Current requirements include a classroom personnel-to-student ratio of no more than 1:10 with no more than 20 students in a classroom, a limit affirmed by recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child Care.<sup>1</sup> This bill would create an exception for Montessori schools and programs, allowing such providers to remain eligible for PEGP funds with a classroom personnel-to-student ratio of up to 1:14 when some of the students are five years or

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<sup>1</sup> Ratios and Group Sizes, Childcare.Gov (Accessed February 2023): <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/ratios-and-group-sizes>

older. This proposed exemption exceeds the maximum recommended classroom personnel-to-student ratio of 1:12 for students over five years of age.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.