

Montessori Schools of Maryland

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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

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