



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
SB893: Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023
March 7, 2023
SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair; The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair; and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports SB893. This bill would provide more opportunities to expand our teaching workforce, including new opportunities for preschool teacher certification, an area of particular concern for our board as the governing body for Montgomery County's Head Start program.

Early Care and Education continues to be a key priority for our board. Expanding access to high-quality and affordable preschool is critical for Maryland families and this is why our board has tracked the progress of the Blueprint plan so closely. Adding additional PreK spots across the state is an important goal, but our board has maintained that a mixed delivery system that includes public and private providers is the best option. The Blueprint's extensive requirements for PreK teachers' certification though means that many child care providers in private centers and family child care homes, including those with decades of experience and extensive State required training, have little or no opportunity to qualify as certified prekindergarten teachers, resulting in their exclusion from these expansions. SB893 addresses a significant obstacle in this process by allowing providers to complete an alternative teacher preparation program, which will allow experience, stackable credentials, and an on-site practicum leading to certification. In addition, the on-site practicum for teachers is key to their economic well-being because they will not experience a loss of income during this time and the child care system will remain stable, retaining teachers during this on-site practicum. The increase of prekindergarten educators means an expansion of prekindergarten seats for many children across the state.

As advocates for the low-income community, we recognize that the state’s teacher shortage is a serious problem and one that disproportionately impacts schools with higher percentages of students living in poverty, resulting in less experienced teachers working in high poverty schools.¹ According to a Montgomery County evaluation, *Higher-need schools have lower average teacher compensation and a higher percent novice teachers than lower-need schools.*² This is problematic because less experienced teachers may be less equipped to address some of the challenges of working in high-needs schools, such as supporting students who have experienced trauma, effectively educating a larger number of English Language Learners, and supporting students who may face serious day-to-day challenges like food insecurity. SB893 can help to address this issue by increasing the overall teacher workforce in the state. Proposals in this bill, including adding Maryland to the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact, expanding the Teaching Fellows for Maryland scholarship program, and establishing the Grow Our Own Educators scholarship program, can all help to address a serious need in the state.

It is also important to note that SB893 provides additional financial support to teachers. This change is particularly important in areas like Montgomery County, where the cost of living is so high. According to the Maryland Community Action Partnership’s latest report, the Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard for a household with one adult, one preschooler, and one school age child is \$116,864, a huge amount that would pose many challenges for new teachers.³

The Community Action Board applauds Governor Moore’s efforts to support Early Care and Education and to address critical educational needs in the state through SB893. We ask the Committee for a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.bcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BCF-Education-Trust-Report.pdf>

² <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/learning-journey/Board%20Report%20-%20All%20sections%20v28%209%2030.pdf>

³ <https://maryland-cap.org/the-maryland-2023-self-sufficiency-standard-calculator/>