



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

Maryland State Child Care Association

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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.

February 8, 2023

Testimony Concerning HB 206

Education-Teacher Certification-Montessori Schools

Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee

Chair: Delegate, Vanessa Atterbeary

Vice Chair: Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins

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.