

TO: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

BILL: House Bill 1441 – Early Childhood Education – Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs - Alterations

DATE: March 27, 2024

POSITION: Support with Amendments

Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) would like to express our support for **HB 1441**, with amendments. Overall, we support the bill's intent to establish a career ladder framework for early childhood educators, facilitating various pathways for them to advance to lead Pre-K teacher roles by recognizing their prior learning and experience.

Additionally, we endorse the bill's provisions for extending funding for crucial early childhood workforce grants such as the Maryland Child Care Credential and the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund. Furthermore, the legislation proposes an extension of the Pre-K Expansion Grant to FY 2029, which would facilitate the establishment of new seats in both private provider and public school settings as well as support the transition of providers to the Pre-K formula funding in the subsequent year. We also support the establishment of "hubs" to assist local education agencies in partnering with private providers. AIB and MSDE recommended hubs in the 2023 Joint Chairmen's Report recommendations. These hubs are intended to coordinate programming and services effectively among private providers and between private providers and LEAs to expand access to high-quality, full-day Pre-K programs.

MSDE and AIB have concerns about a provision in the bill that would allow teaching assistants to meet the high quality staffing requirement without earning a Child Development Associate (CDA). This requirement takes effect in 2027, which gives current staff several years to earn a CDA. A CDA can be completed in less than a year and State funds are available to cover the cost of the CDA. We respectfully request that the committee not adopt this provision.

MSDE and the AIB request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates on **HB 1441**. Please contact Rachel Hise, Executive Director of the AIB, at rachel.hise@maryland.gov or at 410-991-7525, or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.