



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

Testimony in Support of HB 1441
“Early Childhood Education - Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs - Alterations”
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee / Budget and Tax Committee
March 27, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) supports HB 1441, which would make alterations to the provision of publicly-funded pre-K in community-based child care programs, and also take valuable steps to better support the early childhood workforce and remove barriers to obtaining additional training, credentials, and higher education opportunities.

MDAEYC is a professional association of 2,000 early childhood educators, allied professionals, and families. We promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood education practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Alignment with the Early Childhood Education field’s call to elevate early childhood education as a profession. We appreciate HB 1441’s provisions which provide flexibility and phased approaches in addressing workforce challenges. The bill's provisions resonate with the vision outlined in the *Unifying Framework For the Early Childhood Profession*, a national movement to elevate the profession, emphasizing the importance of a diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated early childhood education workforce across all states and settings.¹

Supporting early childhood educators’s preparation, qualifications, and increased compensation to teach in publicly-funded Pre-K classrooms: Early Childhood Career Ladder. HB 1441 creates an Early Childhood Career Ladder which establishes multiple pathways for educators to meet the education and certification requirements to be eligible as Pre-K teachers in private programs.

- In addition to the more traditional pathways to certification, we support the inclusion of the educator pathway based on 10 years experience, a CLASS assessment of classroom quality, and a requirement to earn an associate’s degree by 2030. This is an important addition to the pathways for educators.
- This competency-based credentialing of early childhood educators is one valuable way to give teachers professional credit for the skills and abilities that they can demonstrate. It is more feasible for the current child care workforce to achieve, and it recognizes the value of experience as an educator while also maintaining a standard of teacher qualification based on an observation of the quality of education and care the teacher provides.

¹ [Unifying Framework Executive Summary](https://powertotheprofession.org/) retrieved from <https://powertotheprofession.org/>

- The Career Ladder provision references increased compensation for educators who advance in their education, credentials, and preparation. We support raising teacher qualifications, but these must be accompanied by increased compensation for teachers with enhanced qualifications. Please clarify how the ladder itself compensates educators, and how increased compensation is provided as an educator moves to different levels.

Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund. We support the bill's provision which prioritizes scholarship funding for students attending colleges or universities that offer native language or bilingual course work in early childhood education or a related field.

- As the professional requirements for child care providers increase, we support efforts to ensure that all providers have equitable opportunities to pursue higher education and advance professionally.
- Access to education in one's native language helps college students be successful in their degree programs. Further, child care providers with additional education and training in early childhood education can increase their knowledge and skills in caring for children, which benefits the children and families they serve as well.

Pre-kindergarten Provider Hubs. We support the creation of Hubs to provide support to private Pre-K educators through professional development and technical assistance.

Waivers on meeting mixed delivery standards. It is important that County Boards are held accountable to meeting the requirements for mixed delivery of Pre-K under the Blueprint law. We can understand the decision to create a slower phase-in of mixed delivery system benchmarks for Pre-K provision in private community based programs. We support the provision requiring Counties to demonstrate Good Faith Effort in implementing mixed delivery and partnering with community-based programs

In conclusion, House Bill 1441 represents a significant step forward in strengthening our state's prekindergarten programs while aligning with broader efforts to raise qualifications and compensation in the early childhood education profession. By addressing workforce challenges and aligning qualifications with necessary competencies, we can ensure that every child in Maryland has access to high-quality early childhood education that lays the foundation for lifelong success.

For these reasons, MDAEYC respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1441.

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