



Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
HB1441: Early Childhood Education – Publicly Funded
Prekindergarten Programs – Alterations
March 27, 2024
Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. For 65 years, The Arc Montgomery County has supported children, youth, adults, seniors and families affected by disabilities like autism and Down syndrome, by providing child care, work skills training, employment, community living services, resources, respite care and advocacy.

We are writing to urge a favorable report on HB1441: Early Childhood Education – Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs – Alterations.

The Arc Montgomery County Karasik Family, Infant & Child Care Center, affectionately known as **KFICCC**, is a family-centered child care program. In every classroom, typically-developing children, children with developmental disabilities and children with special health care needs play and learn together. The staff includes pediatric registered nurses, trained child care providers, and a family worker who provides case management services. *Every child enrolled at KFICCC has the opportunity to thrive!*

At The Arc Montgomery County's KFICCC, it has been an ongoing and deepening struggle to attract and retain Pre-K teachers with the right credentials who are willing and qualified to support complex children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. The changes in teacher certification requirements proposed through HB1441 would be very helpful to The Arc Montgomery County, and our capacity for supporting children with and without disabilities.

HB1441 takes essential steps to bolster the childcare workforce, resulting in more prekindergarten teachers and needed increases in prekindergarten slots across every district in Maryland. By removing barriers faced by private providers, this bill will foster the growth of a diverse and vibrant early childhood education workforce and overall landscape in our state.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future details the importance of having a thriving **mixed-delivery Pre-K system: integrating public schools and private community-based**

childcare providers to create options and accessibility. The changes to law, proposed through HB1441, would help drive progress toward the realization of this envisioned future!

It includes flexibilities/alternative pathways to achieving educator certification without compromising quality, establishing necessary support systems for community-based providers, and investing in programs that nurture our diverse childcare workforce.

The Arc Montgomery County's KFICCC is a national model for inclusive childcare, but the years since the pandemic have challenged its sustainability: It cannot operate without a sufficient workforce, and HB 1141 will help ensure there are workforce options and pathways that are greatly needed for The Arc and other providers around the state.

For all of these reasons, The Arc Maryland and The Arc Montgomery County support HB 1441 and urge the committee for a favorable report.

For more information, please contact:

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