



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 600
Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund - Alterations

This legislation would revise the requirements of the state's Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund. These changes would help to increase the amount of child care providers in the state and foster growth in bilingual and native language child care and early childhood education.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education, 381 child care providers participated in the Child Care Career and Professional Development Program in FY 2023 and 381 are enrolled for FY 2024. Twenty-four colleges received \$2.4 million in FY 2024 to cover the tuition, fees, and textbooks for child care providers who are pursuing a college degree in early education.

Increase the Post-Graduation Service Commitment

Maryland has a critical workforce shortage in child care and we must find ways to build capacity. The Fund only requires a 10 hour per week post-graduation service commitment for both two and four year degrees, a limited commitment that is preventing the program from adequately building capacity.

Increasing the service commitment to a minimum of 20 hours per week would help build a quality workforce and increase capacity. Notably, this requirement would only apply prospectively, with all current and former program participants grandfathered into the existing service requirement.

Expand Bilingual Career Pathways

Under its existing criteria, the Fund prioritizes program applicants who have not previously attended college.¹ This bill would codify that criterion and additionally prioritize applicants who have been accepted by an accredited institution of higher

¹ COMAR 13a.14.09.08

education that offers native language or bilingual coursework in early childhood education or a related field.

There is a great need for bilingual early educators. Twenty percent of Marylanders speak a language other than English at home.² That percentage is even higher in some Maryland counties. More than 40% of Montgomery County residents, nearly 30% of Prince George's County residents, and 25% of Howard County residents speak a language other than English at home. There are thousands of children who would benefit from having a bilingual provider or teacher.

Moreover, offering bilingual higher education would help to attract and to retain more child care providers in the profession. Maryland has lost nearly half of its family child care providers since 2017.³ We are currently short nearly 53,000 child care slots statewide.⁴

Unfortunately, there are not currently any bilingual or native language course offerings in Maryland for child care providers. Clackamas Community College in Oregon has pioneered an associate's degree in early childhood education with coursework offered in Spanish, which could serve as a model for Maryland colleges.⁵

Conclusion

Child care in Maryland needs help on many fronts to continue to serve the needs of working Maryland families with children and to provide better employment for providers. This bill is a step in the right direction, that in conjunction with other efforts being considered this session, will help to stabilize this essential industry.

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MD/PST045223>

³ Maryland Family Network

⁴ Bipartisan Policy Center

⁵ <https://www.clackamas.edu/academics/departments-programs/early-childhood-education-and-family-studies-aas>