

BILL: House Bill 395 **DATE:** January 31, 2024

SUBJECT: Prince George's County - Early Childhood Education Program and High School Child Care Centers - Established PG 504-24 **COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

POSITION: Information Only

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EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding House Bill 395– Prince George's County - Early Childhood Education Program and High School Child Care Centers - Established PG 504-24, which requires MSDE to assist Prince George’s County Board of Education in establishing a child care center in each public high school in which the pregnancy rate among students is greater than one percent.

For a child care center to be licensed in Maryland, an applicant must go through several steps. First, the applicant must submit a “Notice of Intent to Operate a New Child Care Facility” to their local MSDE Licensing Branch. Next, the applicant is responsible for obtaining various permits and authorizations from state and local governmental agencies such as zoning permits, approvals and inspections, and approval from the Fire Marshal.

Once all approvals and authorizations are received by the regional office, the application process begins. The assigned licensing specialist works closely with the applicant to answer all questions the applicant may have, provide continuous technical assistance (TA) to the applicant, and ensure that all required documents are received. These documents include but are not limited to the following: staffing patterns, staff qualifications, personnel lists, the release of information forms, criminal background checks and clearances, medical forms, menus, the center’s plan of operation, and workers compensation insurance coverage.

After all documents are received and verified, the assigned specialist then conducts onsite inspections at the facility intended for care to ensure the program has sufficient materials and equipment to promote the growth of development of child care children and that the facility is set up to meet applicable health and safety requirements for the ages of children intended. Onsite inspections entail the licensing specialist making a single visit or multiple visits to the proposed site depending on the number and severity of the concerns that the licensing specialist observes during the site visits that require correction before MSDE issues a license.

Overall, this process can take several months or even years pending approvals from state and local governmental agencies and how quickly the applicant responds to the agency's concerns and makes any necessary corrections before the agency will issue a license. Nonetheless, the assigned specialist will assist the program in obtaining a license throughout the duration of the process. After licensure, the assigned licensing specialist monitors the center through annual inspections and is available to the centers to provide any technical assistance the center requests. MSDE is more than willing to comply with requirements outlined in HB 395 and work collaboratively with the Prince George's County Board of Education to that end.

However, MSDE believes this bill may have a significant fiscal and operational impact, particularly if all 33 high schools require the establishment of a child care program. This will mean the thirteen (13) licensing specialists currently assigned to the Prince George's County regional office will be required to review and process at least two (2) additional applications. In addition, the approvals to operate the programs will become a high priority based on the need for the programs to be opened by the 2025-2026 school year. As a result, the approval process will have to be expedited and the assigned applications would then have to be prioritized over the responsibilities of the licensing specialist's current caseload, which consists of responding to and potentially investigating complaints regarding child care facilities, serving emergency suspension actions after a facility's license has been emergently suspended, conducting inspections, and testifying at administrative hearings.

To avoid an extended approval process for the 33 potential child care programs and potential customer service concerns amongst both the newly assigned applicants and the caseloads previously assigned, MSDE will most likely need an additional 1.5 staff members, as well as approval for overtime compensation to keep up with the increased workload that may be a result of the impending law.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate HB 395.

For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne at 410-767-0504, or Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov.