

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Support with Amendments
House Bill 1441 – Early Childhood Education
Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs – Alterations**

February 26, 2024

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendments House Bill 1441. The Board incorporates by reference amendments provided by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education and the Public School Superintendent's Association, but also would like to commend the sponsor for recognizing that there are many concerns about the public/private provider requirements in the current law. Baltimore City Public Schools has been providing full day prekindergarten much longer than other school districts in the State, years prior to the passage of the Blueprint. The school system has been servicing 4 years old with much success. This current requirement would mean students that are currently served by the school district would be required to move to another program. The Board agrees that the private providers participation should be a goal of at least 50% under 7-1A-03 in each school district, without removing public school students from available public school prekindergarten seats to fulfill the goal.

The area of concern that this Board shares with the sponsor is that the current law requires that prekindergarten teaching assistants must have hold a Child Development Associate certificate or an Associate's degree by June 30, 2027 or show progress toward the CDA or AA. At present, approximately 75% of City School's paraprofessionals do not meet the qualification of having a CDA or AA, although more than 60% have at least 15 years' experience. In order to ensure individuals with significant experience successfully working in these roles are not displaced from their positions if they are unable to meet these new requirements, the sponsor has modified the Blueprint law to include alternative approaches for pre-K teaching assistants.

However, there still is some concern that more flexibility should be considered. Flexibility goes back to the theory that we want the best people in the classroom. We have many teaching assistants that for reasons such as family obligations, money and other work commitments may make it not possible to be able to complete the requirements to pursue a CDA but are exemplary in their job performance.

AMENDMENT #1

Any teaching assistant with more than 15 years' experience in a pre-kindergarten classroom is exempt from holding a Child Development Assistant certificate or an Associates degree, but instead have:

- a. a letter of endorsement from a current principal or supervisor and the District Office of Early Learning that they be exempt based on years of experience and a positive performance review.

AMENDMENT #2

7-1A-03

It is the goal of the State that at least 50% of the prekindergarten slots provided in each county be provided by eligible private providers beginning in the 2027-2028 school year and is not a mandatory requirement and should not require removing existing public students in public school prekindergarten seats to fulfill the goal.

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