



## House Bill 1455

### *Public Prekindergarten and Child Care Providers – Waiver Action Plan and Assistance Hubs*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 6, 2024

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1455. This bill instructs the Maryland State Department of Education and the Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board to create a network of child care provider assistance hubs across the state. The hubs would support child care providers in the implementation of pre-K expansion and early childhood education via a mixed delivery system as envisioned by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Counties see this as an additional tool to aid in the fulfillment of this critical priority of the Blueprint.

Counties have worked creatively with local school systems to support and grow early childhood education programs and workforces, but they need greater support from the State and legislature to successfully implement the Blueprint's vision for pre-K in Maryland. While the capacity and situation vary between counties, these are near-universal issues facing every corner of the state.

HB 1455's creation of a network of assistance hubs located in diverse parts of the state will not only support local providers but will also create a statewide infrastructure for peer support, business development, and resource sharing. In doing so, HB 1455 helps address the Maryland's current challenges of not having enough early childhood education private providers and workers to expand pre-K services as envisioned under the Blueprint.

Counties strongly welcome the state support envisioned by HB 1455 and its creation of an additional tool to ensure the successful expansion of early childhood education to serve all of Maryland's three- and four-year-olds. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS HB 1455** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.