

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

House Bill 1441

Early Childhood Education – Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs - Alterations

House Ways and Means Committee

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Lauren Lamb

Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports, with an amendment, House Bill 1441, which would change requirements for a teacher's certificate in early childhood education, alter the teaching credentials required for staff of qualified providers for prekindergarten services for purposes of the Prekindergarten Grant Program, and repeal certain requirements for county boards of education to ensure that a certain percentage of publicly funded prekindergarten slots are provided by eligible private providers.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Early childhood education addresses a uniquely impactful period in a child's academic career. We know from an extensive body of research that children's learning before and during prekindergarten through 3rd grade have profound long-term effects on their literacy, social, and emotional development.^{1 2} As we working toward the Blueprint's vision of high-quality prekindergarten for all children in our state, we recognize the importance of expanding pathways to teaching, diversifying the profession, and reducing barriers such as the cost of preparation programs and excess certification testing.

¹ Universal pre-K: The long-term benefits that exceed short-term costs. Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy (2022).

<https://mccourt.georgetown.edu/news/universal-pre-k-long-term-benefits-exceed-short-term-costs/>

² Effectiveness of Early Literacy Instruction: Summary of 20 Years of Research. Institute of Education Sciences (2021).

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021084.pdf



We ardently support efforts to make the teaching profession more accessible and equitable. However, we are deeply concerned about this bill's proposal eliminating the requirement for a bachelor's degree to receive an early childhood education certificate, which encompasses prekindergarten through 3rd grade. This change would greatly reduce the technical training and classroom-based experience that teacher candidates receive during their preparation program, including in critical areas such as teaching reading. Further, research suggests a correlation between an educator's level of education and student outcomes.³ To ensure that all early childhood educators are thoroughly prepared to take on this important role, we would urge an amendment to strike §6-129 on page 1, lines 20-33.

We appreciate the measures in this bill to recognize the experience of veteran early childhood educators teaching prekindergarten. To that end, we would support efforts to exempt current prekindergarten educators from additional certification requirements through the establishment of an experience-based waiver.

With the adoption of the proposed amendments, we urge the Committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 1441.

³ Pre-K Teachers and Bachelor's Degrees: Envisioning Equitable Access to High-Quality Preparation Programs. New America (2018). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED590746.pdf>