



Testimony Concerning HB 1441
“Early Childhood Education - Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs - Alterations”
Submitted to the House Ways & Means and Appropriations Committees
February 26, 2024

Position: Favorable with amendments

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports a core provision of HB 1441, which would alter the pre-kindergarten teacher credentials required under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

HB 1441 would establish as a minimum for public pre-kindergarten teachers an Associate’s degree in early childhood education. MFN supports this provision which will vouchsafe quality while reducing barriers to private providers participation in the delivery of public pre-K. We have concerns, however, with the provision in the bill that would remove the requirement that local education authorities partner to deliver 50% of public pre-k in private child care settings.

A longstanding goal of MFN and its allies states that pre-K will be offered through a “mixed delivery” system-- the principle that publicly funded pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds should be offered not solely in public schools. High-quality providers already established in their communities, such as child care programs, can receive public funds to educate pre-K students, provided that the quality of the education is the equivalent of what those pupils would receive in a public school classroom. HB 1441 removes the requirement originally called for in the Blueprint, inserting instead a stated goal. MFN is concerned this may adversely affect progress towards this goal’s achievement.

MFN advocates all steps be taken to make certain that the establishment of competency-based certification criteria does not diminish quality standards, but rather gives providers and the State new and necessary flexibility in determining that the standards are met. Doing so will better ensure a more diverse workforce and better ensure quality programming for all children.

We look forward to continued dialogue in support of HB 1441.

