

Testimony - HB 1441, Early Childhood Education - Publicly Funded Pre-K Programs
Favorable
House Ways & Means Committee
February 26, 2024
SEIU Local 500

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

We at SEIU Local 500 represent childcare providers throughout the state of Maryland. Many of whom wish to be a part of helping our state reach its early childhood education goals set forth in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Many of our members have enrolled in education programs to guide them towards being certified pre-k teachers. Unfortunately, the educational benchmarks for teacher certification typically include internships and other classroom based attendance that would require our childcare providers to close their doors while attempting to meet the rigid requirements of their education programs. Closing down childcare centers for upwards of an entire year for the sake of educational benchmarks does not help meet the goals of the Blueprint.

Child care providers cannot afford to lose their three and four year olds to public schools, however not all can equitably participate in the expansion of public pre-k. More unintended consequences include less access and affordability for infant and toddler care, more child care providers closing businesses and more unlicensed/illegal child care which leads to poor outcomes for children.

In order to offer a Pre-Kindergarten program currently in law, childcare providers must first be certified through the state of Maryland by a county board. Presently, both Teacher Preparation Programs and Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs require P-3 certification or a bachelor's degree and pursuing certification which includes a teacher residency. The General Assembly passed a bill last year that set the stage for the Department to create alternative pathways to certification. HB1441 is the logical next step to this by allowing for Associates Degrees in Early Childhood Education to also qualify a provider to receive a teaching certificate in Early Childhood Education, requires Local Education Agencies and MSDE to create resources to help private providers to participate in the mixed-delivery system, and creates a pathway to credit private providers for prior experience.

HB 1441 serves to offer an alternative pathway to teacher certification for those childcare providers seeking to become pre-k teachers. Again, this legislation goes a

long way to meet the needs of this state's early childhood education goals set forth in the Blueprint.

We ask for your support and a favorable report.