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<b>BILL:</b>	House Bill 1455	<b>DATE:</b>	March 6, 2024
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Public Prekindergarten and Child Care Providers - Waiver Action Plan and Assistance Hubs	<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Ways and Means
<b>POSITION:</b>	No Position		
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**EXPLANATION:**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding House Bill (HB) 1455 Public Prekindergarten and Child Care Providers - Waiver Action Plan and Assistance Hubs. HB 1455 requires the Agency, in collaboration with the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), to establish assistance hubs throughout the State to support child care providers and coordinate partnerships within the State's mixed delivery system.

The Agency strongly believes, as intended by HB1455, that the proposed hubs may help bridge the gap between public and private child care providers, County Boards, and stakeholders from different jurisdictions across the State. Currently, child care providers across Maryland have expressed concerns around the limited collaboration taking place between providers and their respective local education agencies and County Boards. Child care providers (inclusive of Letter of Compliance programs) believe a breakdown in communication amongst the State's mixed delivery partners may lead to misinformation and a lack of collaborative resources and understanding, which could pose a negative impact to the children served. The establishment of the hubs would provide a centralized and direct "go to" entity to tear down those barriers, provide much needed supports and resources, and create a space where communication is effective and conducive to collaboration. The hubs could prove beneficial to the LEAs as well, as they could work directly with the hub rather than collaborating with many different private providers. Furthermore, HB 1455 ensures that the hubs provide assistance with writing grant applications and develop additional supports for educators whose first language is not English, both of which remain critical priorities for the Department.

To establish the hubs in centralized and diverse locations throughout the State, as directed, additional staff would be needed to oversee the quality of the hubs, implement structures, facilitate meetings, and manage coordination efforts. The Agency estimates that, ultimately, individual hubs for each county will be more functional and imperative, resulting in the management of 24 Hubs altogether. However, currently, HB 1455 does not allocate additional resources or grants to implement this legislation. Existing MSDE personnel and resources cannot absorb the additional work outlined in HB 1455.

In respect to the establishment of a Child Care Provider Hub Advisory Committee, which will advise the Agency and other relevant parties on fulfilling the purposes of the assistance hubs, the Department would like to note that there are existing advisory committees with similar membership that can be leveraged to support the

success of the hubs. Finally, HB1455 does not clarify whether the staff for the hubs should be provided by MSDE or outside entities that are proximate to the community. If commissioned to do so, the Agency would require additional staff members to support, monitor, and manage this body of work.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate HB 1455. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504 if you would like any additional information.