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BILL NO.: **HB 1441**

TITLE: Early Childhood Education - Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs – Alterations

SPONSOR: Delegate Atterbear

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means

POSITION: **SUPPORT w/ AMENDMENT**

DATE: February 26, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS, WITH AMENDMENTS, HB1441** – Early Childhood Education - Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs – Alterations. Modest alterations to teacher certification and flexibility for expanding Pre-kindergarten will help counties meet their obligations under the State’s Blueprint.

Baltimore County supports Maryland’s Blueprint for Education and its goals to enhance educational spending and expand educational resources for children. We also believe that additional flexibility in meeting some of the requirements within the Blueprint would enable each local school system the ability to meet their needs in the most efficient way for that system. Providing modest flexibility in teacher certifications, as well as additional resources directed to training young teachers, will greatly help meet the demands of expanded prekindergarten.

Baltimore County also respectfully requests a few additional amendments to provide added flexibility in standing up expanded prekindergarten:

1. Baltimore County requests the allowed use of spaces outside of existing schools for prekindergarten classrooms to include government buildings, hospitals, or other community spaces, including libraries or community centers. We would also encourage greater flexibility in the application of education specifications in non-school facilities.
2. Related to this flexibility in prekindergarten spaces, Baltimore County requests that a county school board be allowed to utilize State CIP funds for leasing public facilities for

expanded prekindergarten, where it would be more cost-effective than building new facilities.

3. And finally, we request that the original timeframes within the Blueprint for teachers and teaching assistants be retained. As written, HB1441 would effectively require a teacher to either have a completed associate's degree or 9,000 hours of accrued experience by 2025, when the previous timeframe was 2027-2028. We are concerned about the potential for unintended consequences if changing the timeframes for meeting credentialing benchmarks.

With this additional flexibility, counties can creatively utilize additional spaces for prekindergarten, allowing us to focus limited resources on hiring and training teachers, rather than building expensive capital projects.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE, WITH AMENDMENT**, report on **HB1441** from the House Ways and Means Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.