

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Support with Amendments
House Bill 1426 – Education
Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Alterations**

February 26, 2024

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendments House Bill 1426. The Board incorporates by reference amendments provided by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education and the Public School Superintendent’s Association, but also would like to add two other amendments. The first will allow the school system to maintain teaching assistants that have many years of experience, but are unable to obtain a Child Development Associate certificate or an Associate’s degree. At present, approximately 75% of City School’s paraprofessionals do not meet this qualification, although more than 60% have at least 15 years’ experience. In order to ensure individuals with significant experience successfully working in these roles are not displaced from their positions if they are unable or disinclined to meet these new requirements, the legislature should modify the Blueprint law to include alternative approaches for pre-K teaching assistants, commensurate with their years of experience.

The idea that flexibility should be considered goes back to the theory that we want the best people in the classroom. We have many teaching assistants that for reasons such as family obligations, money and other work commitments that may not be able to complete the requirements of the current law but are exemplary in their job performance.

The second issue that we are concerned about is the public/private provider requirements in the current law. Baltimore City Public Schools has been providing full day prekindergarten much longer than other school districts in the State, years prior to the passage of the Blueprint. The school system has been servicing 4 years old with much success. This current requirement would mean students that are currently served by the school district would be required to move to another program. The Board would like to see the private providers participation be a goal of at least 50% under 7-1A-03 in each school district or an exemption of school districts that have been providing prekindergarten to the majority of 4 year olds prior to the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

AMENDMENT #1

Any teaching assistant with more than 15 years’ experience in a pre-kindergarten classroom is exempt from holding a Child Development Assistant certificate or an Associates degree, but instead have:

- a. a letter of endorsement from a current principal or supervisor and the District Office of Early Learning that they be exempt based on years of experience and a positive performance review.

AMENDMENT #2

7-1A-03

It is the goal of the State that at least 50% of the prekindergarten slots provided in each county be provided by eligible private providers beginning in the 2027-2028 school year and is not a mandatory requirement and should not require removing existing public students in public school prekindergarten seats to fulfill the goal.

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