

B&T Delegate Mireku-North Testimony in Support of

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1303: Child Care Centers – Teacher Qualifications Alterations
April 2nd, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 1303: Child Care Centers – Teacher Qualifications – Alterations**.

Through conversations with Montgomery County’s vibrant and growing refugee community, I have learned about the desire to gain more access to work opportunities in the community. Many refugees arrive in Maryland after fleeing political or economic strife, often with little more than the clothes on their backs. In the process, they may lose critical documentation, including proof of education. Without access to these documents, the process of otherwise qualified individuals finding work becomes immensely harder.

At the same time, Maryland’s child care facilities are struggling to hire and retain qualified teachers. House Bill 1303 addresses both challenges by calling for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a pathway for an individual who lacks proof of their educational attainment to work as a child care teacher.

While the original version of this bill codified existing regulatory requirements- such as coursework and employment- as minimum experiential qualifications for childcare teachers, the current version defers to MSDE to develop this pathway. This adjustment ensures that individuals, like refugees, who are qualified but lack formal proof of educational attainment, still have a viable path to employment, while preserving MSDE’s established processes. By doing so, it helps to alleviate workforce shortages while maintaining high standards in early childhood education.

[From the Maryland Department of Education two million in short-term grants](#) for early child care providers to [the expansion of Pre-K access through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future](#), we are making meaningful progress in addressing the child care crisis. However, there is still more to be done. Furthermore, in the face of federal policies that send a message of exclusion to refugees and immigrants, Maryland must reaffirm its commitment to inclusion, opportunity, and economic mobility.

For the benefit of our children, families, and workforce, I respectfully urge a favorable report on **House Bill 1303**.

Bernice Mireku-North

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March 31, 2025

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1303 - Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications - Alterations

We respectfully urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to make a favorable report on HB 1303– Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications – Alterations as we believe it will help to ease the early care and education workforce shortage we are facing, while improving the diversity of our early childhood workforce. *We support the amendments made in the House.*

The early care and education workforce is critical in our community. They are the workforce behind the workforce – caring for young children so parents can participate in the labor force. We are currently facing a workforce shortage crisis. The Comptroller's recent State of the Economy Report on Child Care showed that Maryland lost 26% of our ECE workforce during the pandemic, putting the State in the top ten for sharpest decline.ⁱ And we haven't recovered. While we work towards more long-term solutions to stabilize the industry and improve access to quality early care and education for our children, we also need to take action now to bring more individuals into the profession.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, which serves as our local Child Care Resource and Referral Center, has recently begun offering Core of Knowledge classes in Farsi, in addition to English and Spanish, and conducting outreach to the growing migrant population in our county. Outreach partners reported frequently that while many women in their networks were interested in working in child care centers, that they were unable to produce documentation of their high school equivalency, due to either not having completed their education or to not being able to get relevant paperwork from their home countries. This is particularly true for women from Afghanistan, a country which is known to devalue the education of women. These women are willing to earn their GED, but need to work now to support their families. House Bill 1303 would allow them to secure a job in a child care center, on a team with other teachers and under the supportive supervision of administration, while furthering their education.

Submitted on behalf of the Children's Opportunity Alliance by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

Laura Jahromi, Manager, Strategic Initiatives
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The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](https://www.mocochildren.org) is a locally legislated Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity that connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

ⁱ <https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/reports/static-files/research/childcare.pdf>

HB1303 DHHS FAV MGA25.pdf

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Montgomery County

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HB 1303

DATE: April 2, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegates Mireku-North and Wims

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey

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POSITION: FAVORABLE (Montgomery Department of Health and Human Services)

Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications – Alterations

House Bill 1303 directs the Maryland State Board of Education to create a pathway through rules and regulations for an individual who is qualified to be a child care teacher but lacks proof of necessary educational attainment to attest to the qualifying educational credentials they hold.

Currently in regulations, early care and education teachers must hold a high school diploma. House Bill 1303 established alternative pathway for individuals to become a teacher in a child care center. This alternative would be especially helpful for individuals from other countries that might not have been able to secure educational documentation before arriving in the U.S. Providing for alternative pathways will increase the number of individuals who could work as a child care teacher, which is critical at a time when Maryland is facing a shortage of child care teacher and child care seats. Between 2019 and 2022, the number of child care workers fell in the State by 26%, and it has been noted that new workers are not entering the field of early care and education at previous rates.¹ House Bill 1303 would be a tool in the toolbox to bring more teachers into the child care workforce. Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report.

¹ See pg. 24: <https://marylandtaxes.gov/reports/static-files/research/childcare.pdf>