



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over five thousand members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony: HB 524 State Board of Education-Membership-Early Childhood Development Professional Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee February 12, 2025

MSCCA enthusiastically supports HB 524.

Board composition is at the heart of board effectiveness. Progressive boards should continuously consider whether they have the optimum composition. Effective boards are comprised of members who reflect the priorities and challenges of the business, the relevant areas of risk, and the diversity of stakeholders.

HB 524 is asking for equity in composition of the State Board of Education membership, which is reflective of priorities and challenges of the Early Childhood education and care system, as well as inclusive of diverse practitioners, specifically Early Childhood Development Professionals.

The importance of early childhood education and care cannot be overstated and is reflected in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Pillar 1. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Pillar 1 mixed delivery goals clearly cannot be met without early childhood education and care child care programs participation across the state.

High quality care and early childhood education yields positive outcomes for children and lays the foundation for long term success in school and life. We also know that early childhood education and care begins at birth. HB 524 expands the Board's composition to ensure the early childhood education and care expertise is included, as it is the foundation for all learning.

Currently the State Board of Education members do not have expertise in early childhood education and care. The State Board of Education adopts regulations and policies for early childhood education and care. Early childhood education and care is comprised of 6,732 licensed early childhood education and care programs, educating and caring for 206,665 young children, which includes community-based public PreK sites, family child care, center based child care, and nursery schools. The State Board of Education adopts regulations and policies for early childhood education and care programs across 24 jurisdictions. The Division of Early Childhood budget, which includes early childhood education and care programs, is more than \$600 million dollars, yet there is no representation on the State Board of Education for early childhood education and care. If the Board has representation from a student, parent, teacher, and many other proximity experts, why can't we include membership for early childhood development professional?

The positive outcomes of adding an early childhood development professional and practitioner include, but are not limited to:

1. Opportunities to collaborate to build a stronger birth to five system in Maryland.
2. Support the Board in capacity building for not only the PreK mixed delivery goals of the Blueprint Pillar 1, but for the comprehensive birth to five system in Maryland.
3. Provide crucial insights into successes, challenges and concerns faced by early childhood education and care community in order to align decisions with needs in community.

4. Create necessary balance for the Board composition to include expert member who possesses important knowledge and experience and is directly affected by decisions.
5. Support the work of the Board to understand how regulatory decisions and policies will impact the birth to five ecosystem.
6. Ensure the potential business and financial impacts of Board policies and decisions are shared for consideration.

HB 524 functions similarly to the current structure of appointments with the Governor making the ultimate decision to appoint and will be supported with recommendations from an existing Governor's Council, the Office of Child Care Advisory Council. [Section 5-592 :: Maryland Family Law :: 2005 :: Maryland Code :: U.S. Codes and Statutes :: U.S. Law :: Justia](#) with 25 experts council members. Additionally, the State Board of Education

Early Childhood education and care is also connected to supporting parents who need access to quality, affordable, consistent early childhood education and care programs, therefore all early childhood programs are important to families and to the economy.

The Comptroller's State of the Economy <https://marylandtaxes.gov/reports/static-files/research/childcare.pdf> reflects the need to focus on child care decline, which is connected to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future mixed delivery of Public PreK and the unintended consequences to the early childhood education and care system. The Comptroller's report conveys the following concerns:

The potential decrease in the capacity of infant and toddler care.

The decline in standalone child care centers.

There is not enough data available to understand Maryland's child care system and its direct impact on labor force participation.

In conclusion, *"Child care is a fragile market that requires government intervention to enable providers – often small businesses – to succeed and enable parents with young children to work. Child care challenges can create significant headwinds for equitable economic growth. A robust child care system with adequate capacity and affordability to meet demand for all parents interested in working outside of the home will enable more prime age adults to enter the labor force, thereby reducing job vacancies, allowing businesses to grow and create more jobs, and bolstering state revenue."*

HB 524 is a critical step to building a robust early childhood education and care system recommended by the Comptroller with the governing Board and state leaders to ensure success. Our children and families are depending on us to get it right!

MSCCA requests a favorable report.