

Wee Lad & Lassie Early Learning Center

February 10, 2025

HB 524: State Board of Education-Membership-Early Childhood Development Professional Testimony “In Favor”

My name is Dr. Lisa Buchy, and I am testifying in favor of HB 524. Since 1985 I have been an owner and director of early education and care programs in AACo. My company currently operates two locations serving over 100 children including children receiving Child Care Scholarship and providing public Pre-K to low income families for 8 of the past 9 years.

My experience also includes faculty appointments at Johns Hopkins University where I worked on a large-scale childcare quality research grant and at Towson University in the Department of Early Childhood Education where I taught in the educator preparation program at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I serve on the advisory committee of the Maryland State Childcare Leadership Program (MECLP) and the Anne Arundel County Early Childhood Childcare Taskforce.

Early childhood education and care is a key priority for Maryland’s future. High quality care and early education impact school readiness, early literacy and lifelong health and well-being. Children’s long-term outcomes are significantly impacted by what happens from birth to age 5 and the foundation for all that follows is laid down in the first 5 years of each person’s life. Maryland’s education policies set by the board of education have a role to play in supporting children’s positive outcomes. However, while Pre-K- 12 education is at the forefront of consideration, early childhood education and care may be missed due to lack of knowledge of how to address quality instruction and care for very young children. The current state board of education expertise needs to be expanded to include a subject matter expert in the care, learning, and development of children ages 0-5 years. This will ensure that early care and education are considered when setting policy for the system. Board decisions on Pre-K-12 education policy and regulatory decisions such as licensure, certification, leadership, financing, and standards all impact ECE, yet without the ECE subject matter expertise on the board, the impact of these decisions on early education and care are not recognized.

Early care and education programs are businesses that serve the public good. As such, they are subject to economic factors that influence cost and quality including the cost to provide care,

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competition, consumer behavior, and the policy and regulatory climate. A board member with extensive experience and background knowledge of the business model of ECE will be able to provide stakeholders perspective and insight into the economic impact of board decisions which often lead to negative financial outcomes for early care and education programs.

The addition of an early childhood development professional board member will achieve the following:

- Ensure the board is actively aware of how the ECE system works and how it connects to the familiar Pre-K -12 system.
- Enhance the connection between the board's work and the ECE community
- Build a strong bridge between children's early years (0-5) and the PreK-12 system.
- Support the board to look at how policy and regulatory decisions impact the birth-5 system.
- Provide subject matter expertise on young children's care, growth, development and the needs of young children and their families in the context of the Maryland ECE system.
- Deliver the ECE business perspective on how board decisions impact the economics of early education and care

I thank the delegates who have brought this much-needed legislation forward and I urge you to support the passage of this bill.