

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 1261

(Delegate Guyton, *et al.*)

Ways and Means and Appropriations

---

Commission on Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Child  
Care for Children Three Years Old and Younger

---

This bill establishes the Commission on Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Child Care for Children Three Years Old and Younger. The commission must (1) study implementing universal access to high-quality early childhood education and child care for children three years old and younger and (2) make recommendations on ways to make cost-effective, high-quality early childhood education and child care universally available to children three years old and younger in the State. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS), in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), must provide staff for the commission. A member of the commission may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses. The commission must meet at least once every other month and, by October 1, 2025, report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024, and terminates December 1, 2025.**

---

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** With the assistance of staffing resources from MSDE, DLS can likely staff the commission using existing resources. However, DLS general fund expenditures may increase in fiscal 2025 and/or 2026 to the extent that the work of the commission necessitates the assistance of consultants or contractual staff to complete the work. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** Local finances are not materially affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

---

## Analysis

### Current Law:

#### *Prekindergarten Expansion Grants Program and Publicly Funded Prekindergarten*

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program, administered by MSDE, is intended to broaden the availability of high-quality prekindergarten and school readiness services throughout the State for children and their families in coordination with the expansion of publicly funded full-day prekindergarten under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Before approving qualified providers for prekindergarten services to receive a grant, a qualified provider must certify to MSDE that for each classroom funded by Prekindergarten Expansion Grants the provider will meet specified conditions. The Governor must annually appropriate to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Fund an amount that is at least equal to the total amount of all funds received by the program in the prior fiscal year. Beginning in fiscal 2026, funds appropriated to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Fund must be consolidated into the publicly funded full-day prekindergarten program.

A local department of social services (LDSS) or a local health department (LHD) must notify a parent that their child may be eligible for publicly funded prekindergarten programs if the parent (1) applied for economic services with the LDSS or LHD and (2) has a child who will be age three or four by September 1 of the next academic year. By December 1 of each year, each LDSS and each LHD must report to the General Assembly on the number of parents who were given a notification and subsequently enrolled their child in a publicly funded prekindergarten program.

#### *Judy Centers and Patty Centers*

Judy Centers provide early childhood education programs and comprehensive support services for children, from birth through kindergarten, and their families who reside in specific low-income school districts. Under Chapter 36 of 2021, funding is provided for 9 additional Judy Centers annually in each of fiscal 2021 through 2025, and for 18 additional centers annually in fiscal 2026 through 2030, culminating in 135 new Judy Centers by fiscal 2030. The State must prioritize increasing the number of Judy Centers in Title I communities. MSDE may distribute a Judy Center Grant to a local board of education if the local board submits a specified application.

Family Support Centers provide parents and their children with a hospitable and constructive environment and services that (1) improve parenting skills; (2) develop the family as a functioning unit; and (3) promote the growth and development of their children. Chapter 36 provides for 30 additional centers, including \$330,000 for each additional

center, and designates the centers (including existing centers) as Patty Centers, after Patricia H. Kirwan.

### *Child Care*

Chapter 36 established several early childhood accreditation programs in statute that had previously existed in MSDE regulations, including the Child Care Accreditation Support Fund, which pays for provider accreditation application fees and reimburses providers for a program improvement cost; the Child Care Incentive Grant Program, which is intended to improve a child care provider's quality of care through the purchase of approved materials, equipment, or supplies; the Maryland Child Care Credential Program, which provides an achievement bonus, training reimbursement, or a training voucher for individuals attaining an approved credential; and the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund, which assists qualified individuals with the costs of tuition and fees as well as textbooks used for the expense of college coursework toward completion of specified academic progress in early childhood education. Funding for these programs is mandated to increase as specified. Child Care Quality Incentive Grants help qualified child care providers purchase supplies, materials, and equipment. The Office of Child Care in MSDE must designate a primary contact employee for early child care to assist child care providers obtain funding and accreditation and with other related processes.

### *Child Care Scholarship Program*

The Child Care Scholarship Program (formerly known as the Child Care Subsidy Program) provides financial assistance with child care costs to low-income families that meet applicable State or federal requirements. The program is funded through a combination of State funds and the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant. All participating parents or guardians must meet a variety of technical requirements and must be working or enrolled in school, a training program, or a work-related activity.

---

## **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 27, 2024  
rh/clb

---

Analysis by: Scott P. Gates

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510