

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1305

(Delegate Ivey)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Early Childhood Education - Prekindergarten Programs - Montessori Schools

This bill establishes specific eligibility requirements for nonpublic Montessori schools and Montessori programs in nonpublic schools under the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program and the publicly funded full-day prekindergarten program in regard to staff qualifications, student-to-staff ratio, and student-to-classroom area ratio. The bill also authorizes a local board of education to consult with a Montessori teacher in determining how to implement the kindergarten readiness assessment that must be given to all incoming kindergarten students in the State. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. Altering eligibility requirements for Montessori schools and programs is not anticipated to materially affect State funding under the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program or the publicly funded full-day prekindergarten program.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: To the extent that Montessori schools and programs are small businesses, they may benefit from the specific eligibility requirements established under the bill.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill establishes exceptions to *certain* eligibility requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program and the publicly funded full-day prekindergarten program. Specifically, to receive a grant for prekindergarten services

under the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program or the publicly funded full-day prekindergarten program, nonpublic Montessori schools or Montessori programs in nonpublic schools (in addition to other specified requirements) must, in classrooms that contain both children younger than age 5 and children at least age 5:

- maintain at least one teacher and one teacher's aide in every classroom with 25 or fewer students;
- maintain at least one teacher and two teacher's aides in every classroom with at least 26 and fewer than 36 students; and
- maintain a student-to-classroom area ratio of 1 to 30 square feet.

For a nonpublic Montessori school or Montessori program in a nonpublic school, the staff must meet certain Montessori qualifications *rather* than the existing staff qualifications required under the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant or publicly funded prekindergarten programs. Teachers must instead hold a bachelor's degree and be certified by (1) the Association Montessori Internationale, USA; (2) the American Montessori Society; or (3) the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.

Current Law: Under existing requirements for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program, a qualified provider must certify to the Maryland State Department of Education that (in addition to other requirements) the provider, for each classroom funded, will (1) maintain a student-to-classroom personnel ratio of no more than 10 to 1 with a maximum of 20 children per classroom and (2) provide in each classroom at least one teacher certified in early childhood education by the State and at least one teacher's aide who has at least a high school degree.

Publicly funded full-day prekindergarten providers, in addition to other requirements, must also have a student-to-classroom personnel ratio of no more than 10 to 1 with a maximum of 20 children per classroom. Numerous alterations to publicly funded prekindergarten programs (including those applicable to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant) are also being phased in as part of Chapter 36 of 2021 (the Blueprint for Maryland's Future), including provisions regarding minimum staff qualifications for eligibility. For example, beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, all prekindergarten providers must have high staff qualifications, including teachers who, at a minimum, hold (1) State certification for teaching in early childhood education or (2) a bachelor's degree in any field and are pursuing residency through the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program, which includes early childhood coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of pedagogical content knowledge. In addition (also beginning in the 2025-2026 school year), teaching assistants must have at least (1) a Child Development Associate certificate or (2) an associate's degree.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Prince George's County Public Schools; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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