

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 888

(Delegate Solomon, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

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Education - Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation Program -  
Authorization and Reporting

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This bill authorizes prekindergarten alternative teacher preparation programs. Further, the bill expands the entities that may establish an alternative teacher preparation program to include an institution of higher education. The bill also expands a “partner school” for a teacher preparation program to include an eligible prekindergarten provider. The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center must monitor and report on the prekindergarten alternative teacher preparation programs as specified. Finally, the bill specifies that individuals pursuing State certification through a Maryland Approved *Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation Program* may teach prekindergarten at an eligible school, when high staff qualifications come into effect in the 2025-2026 school year. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) can approve additional alternative teacher preparation programs using existing resources. AIB and the MLDS Center can monitor and report using existing resources. Expanding the entities authorized to establish an alternative teacher preparation program may impact enrollment in traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs at public four-year institutions and Baltimore City Community College. Overall, any such impact is anticipated to have a minimal impact on higher education revenues and expenditures; however, the impact on a particular institution may be meaningful.

**Local Effect:** Expanding the entities authorized to establish alternative teacher preparation program may impact local community college enrollment. Overall, any such impact is anticipated to have a minimal impact on higher education revenues and expenditures; however, the impact on a particular institution may be meaningful.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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## Analysis

### **Bill Summary:**

#### *Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs*

A prekindergarten alternative teacher preparation program is defined as a program established by MSDE, a local board of education, an institution of higher education, or a nonprofit organization and approved by the State Superintendent of Schools that (1) focuses on early childhood coursework; (2) requires a participant to complete a residency, as specified; and (3) leads to a participant receiving a Resident Teacher Certificate issued by MSDE.

A participant in an alternative prekindergarten teacher preparation program must complete a teacher training practicum and, beginning July 1, 2025, to qualify for an initial certificate an individual must (1) pass a nationally recognized, portfolio-based assessment of teaching ability; (2) pass a rigorous State-specific examination of mastery of reading instruction and content, as specified; and (3) satisfactorily complete any other requirements established by the State Board of Education.

#### *Reports on Prekindergarten Programs*

AIB must monitor and review the performance of a prekindergarten alternative teacher preparation program. The MLDS Center must report on trends in the number of teacher candidates of color hired by local school systems disaggregated by prekindergarten alternative teacher preparation program as part of an existing report on the preparation and diversity of new teachers.

**Current Law:** Alternative teacher preparation programs for prekindergarten teachers are not currently authorized.

#### *Prekindergarten Funding Formula*

Chapter 36 of 2021 established a new funding formula providing for voluntary full-day prekindergarten for four-year-olds and three-year-olds from low-income families (Tier I). Low-income is defined as at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. Expansion of full-day prekindergarten first focuses on making full-day prekindergarten available for all four-year-olds from low-income families as half-day slots are being converted into full-day slots and new slots are coming online. This occurs at the same time as full-day prekindergarten is expanded gradually for three-year-olds from low-income families.

MSDE must develop a sliding scale to calculate the family share for families with income above 300% of the federal poverty level. Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year (fiscal 2025), four-year-olds from families whose income is between 300% and 600% of the federal poverty level (Tier II) may be offered full-day prekindergarten if space is available to encourage socioeconomic diversity in prekindergarten classrooms. Priority in expanding full-day prekindergarten slots is given to children from low-income families and children with disabilities and children living in homes where English is not the primary spoken language regardless of income. For four-year-olds from families with income above 600% (Tier III), the family share pays the full cost of full-day prekindergarten. However, a county board may provide up to 100% of the family share on behalf of the family.

Public and private providers must meet specified requirements to be eligible to participate in the publicly funded full-day program.

### *High Staff Qualifications*

All eligible prekindergarten providers must include structural elements that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality, including, beginning in the 2025-2026 school year high staff qualifications. This includes 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.

### *Monitoring and Reporting*

In order to meet its obligation to track whether the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is progressing according to plan, AIB must monitor and review the performance of each teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education and an alternative teacher preparation program.

On or before July 1 each year, beginning in 2022 and ending in 2031, the MLDS Center, in consultation with MSDE and the Maryland Higher Education Commission, must submit a report to the board, the Governor, and the General Assembly on the progress made in increasing the preparation and diversity of teacher candidates and new teachers in the State as required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

### *Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs*

An alternative teacher preparation program may be established by a local board of education and approved by the State Superintendent of Schools. In addition, a program

must (1) lead to participant receiving a Resident Teacher Certificate issued by MSDE and (2) include teaching assignments with supervision and mentoring by a qualified teacher.

Each participant in an undergraduate or graduate preparation program or alternative teacher preparation program must complete a teacher training practicum as specified.

**Small Business Effect:** There is currently a shortage of individuals who will qualify prekindergarten teachers under the requirements that go into effect beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Under the bill, private prekindergarten providers (some of which are small businesses) can allow individuals to continue to work as a prekindergarten teacher while pursuing residency through a Maryland Approved *Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation Program*.

**Additional Comments:** The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) advises that it currently holds a planning grant to develop a pathway for a prekindergarten teacher credential (micro-certification). In spring 2022, UMBC began discussions with MSDE around the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Chapter 36) requirements regarding universal prekindergarten and required certification. As a result of the discussion UMBC received a planning grant. UMBC anticipants being the sole sources for a prekindergarten teacher micro certification.

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### Additional Information

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

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center; Maryland State Department of Education; University System of Maryland; Maryland Independent College and University Association; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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