

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 609 (Senator M. Washington)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Education - Early Childhood Education Teachers - Qualifications

The bill expands the entities that may establish an alternative teacher preparation program to include an institution of higher education, a nonprofit organization, or the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The bill also expands a “partner school” for a teacher preparation program to include an eligible prekindergarten provider. The bill establishes criteria for a recipient to earn an early childhood education certification through an alternative teacher preparation program. Finally, the bill authorizes individuals pursuing State certification through an MSDE-approved alternative preparation program to 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.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can approve additional alternative teacher preparation programs and develop standards and criteria for prior learning using existing resources. Expanding the entities authorized to establish 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 a particular institution may be meaningful.

Local Effect: Expanding the entities authorized to establish an 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 at a particular institution may be meaningful.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: An alternative teacher preparation program for an early childhood education certification must require each participant to successfully (1) complete a teacher training practicum or (2) satisfy criteria established by MSDE that evaluate the knowledge and skills from prior learning relating to early childhood education. MSDE, in collaboration with institutions of higher education, must establish standards for and criteria to evaluate the knowledge and skills from prior learning relating to early childhood education, including from a registered apprenticeship.

Current Law:

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.

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.

Small Business Effect: There is currently a shortage of individuals who will qualify as 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 taking a teaching practicum.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; Maryland Independent College and University Association; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2023
km/mcr

Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

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