

February 18, 2020

TO: Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Brookes Publishing, Baltimore, MD

RE: Written testimony for Maryland House Bill 396

As the Maryland-based publisher of the developmental screener Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, already widely used in Maryland and every state in the nation, Brookes Publishing applauds the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee initiative to bring developmental screening to more children and their families. We are pleased to support Maryland House Bill 396, an act concerning Child Care Centers and Early Childhood Screening for Developmental Disabilities, with suggested amendments to sections 9.5-413.1.B(1) and B(2) to allow for parents to complete the screening upon the provider's offering, and to receive subsequent guidance from the provider based on the results.

### The importance of screening

There is broad consensus in the early childhood field that developmental screening benefits young children by detecting delays early and identifying the opportunity to provide the support needed for optimal development. Many studies have shown that the earlier a delay is recognized and addressed, the better the child's chance of substantial improvement. Nobel-prize winning economist James Heckman's work has shown that investing in the early years yields broader societal benefits as well. As a result, screening is now a centerpiece of most efforts to promote healthy outcomes for young children, from legislative mandates to policy recommendations. These include the American Academy of Pediatrics' screening recommendations, Center for Disease Control's Learn the Signs. Act Early campaign, CCDBG Block Grant, the Child Find mandate in the IDEA law, Head Start and Early Head Start's Program Performance Standards, Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, QRIS, the federal initiative Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive!, Help Me Grow systems model, and efforts in many individual states.

Developmental screening has important benefits beyond simply identifying children with delays. The activity of screening promotes observational skills and helps adults learn about child development, enhancing their ability to meet children's needs. Screening also creates opportunities for conversation between providers and parents and encourages collaboration around a child's growth and development. This type of family engagement is a critical success factor not only for achieving the immediate goal of screening but for reaching the broader goals of early care and education.

### About ASQ-3

Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition, is familiar to Maryland childcare providers from the MSDE's 2014 developmental screening initiative. One of the world's most widely used developmental screeners, it is chosen for its accuracy, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and ease of use. The tool is used across early childhood settings, including center-based and family childcare, pediatrics, public preschool, Head Start, home visiting, and community-based initiatives, to check the development of young children birth to 6 years of age.

ASQ-3 questionnaires are completed by parents, or caregivers who spend 15-20 hours/week with the child. Typically, a provider gives the questionnaire to the parent for completion. The provider scores the form and discusses results and next steps with parents. Many centers have chosen to have both provider and parent complete the questionnaire, using the comparison as a basis for discussion about the child's development.

Each questionnaire takes just 10–15 minutes to complete, and is available in multiple languages. A quick tally yields the score in 2–3 minutes. The ASQ-3 score is easy to interpret. Children whose scores fall below the cutoff are referred for further assessment and typically receive services. ASQ-3 User's Guide offers flexibility for referral and follow up based on state or local policies and practices.

ASQ-3 reliably identifies children at risk for delay. Its sensitivity of 86% exceeds the AAP's criteria for high quality tests. The tool was validated on 15,138 children that mirror the U.S. population in terms of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic groups.

### State initiatives

Many states have moved forward successfully with broad-based screening initiatives that include childcare. With tens of thousands of Maryland children receiving care through more than 2,500 licensed childcare centers<sup>1</sup>, offering developmental screenings to parents at these centers is an excellent way to identify children's developmental progress and promote healthy outcomes.

The following states have included screening as a requirement or quality indicator in their Quality Rating Improvement Systems.

Alaska	Kentucky	Ohio
California	Maryland	Oregon
Colorado	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania
Delaware	Michigan	Rhode Island
Florida	Nebraska	South Carolina
Georgia	Nevada	Utah
Illinois	New Jersey	Washington
Indiana	New Mexico	Wisconsin
Iowa	New York	

### Conclusion

Brookes Publishing supports Maryland's efforts to bring developmental screening to more children at an earlier age. We are in favor of Maryland House Bill 396 with amendments to provide for the key role parents play in their child's development. As one Maryland provider shared with us, "Screening with ASQ-3 works because it's a whole team involvement. You're integrating the parents, the student the teachers. Everyone gets involved and is working for the greater good of the child."

<sup>1</sup> Child Care Aware. (2019). *Checking In on the Child Care Landscape: 2019 State Child Care Facts*. State of Maryland. Retrieved from <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/statefactsheets/>.