



Chair Paul G. Pinsky, Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
 2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 23rd, 2021

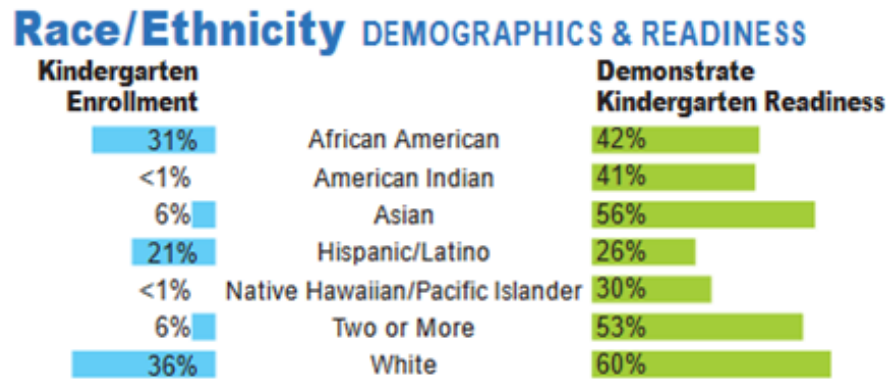
Senate Bill 890: Early Childhood Education - Child Care Provider Support Grant Program (The Child Care Provider Support Act) Favorable

Summary

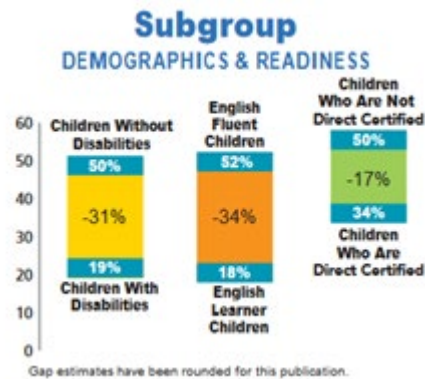
The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations that are committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, asks the committee to ensure that every young child – especially children of color, dual language learners, children from low-income families, and children with disabilities – has access to high-quality early care and education (ECE). 51% of Maryland's population lives in a childcare desert (that is, an area where there are more than three children under age five for each licensed childcare seat)ⁱ. Of the families that can access childcare, the average annual tuition for a family with two children is \$24,980, or 26% of an average family's income.ⁱⁱ Maryland's public preschool program meets only 7 of 10 quality benchmarks according to the National Institute for Early Education Research, and it serves only 27% of Latino children and 28% of Black children.ⁱⁱⁱ Inequitable access to quality ECE contributes to large disparities in academic preparedness before students enter kindergarten. The COVID19 pandemic is widening these disparities by closing ECE centers and increasing the costs of childcare for families. Senate Bill 890 provides critical funds to support ECE centers in low-income communities, and MAREE urges the committee to give the bill a favorable report.

Racial disparities in academic preparation begin before kindergarten.

Data from 2019-2020 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Report shows profound racial and socio-economic inequities.^{iv} There is a 34-point gap in readiness scores between Latino and White kindergarten students and an 18-point gap between Black and White students. There is also a 34% gap in readiness scores between English fluent kindergarten students and students who are English learners. These are bigger gaps than the sizable gap between children from low-income families and children from higher-income families (17 points). These disparities impact students throughout their academic careers and are unsustainable for the state. (See graph X for data for Black, American Indian, Asian, Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children, and children of two more race/ethnicities. See Graph Y for data on other demographic categories)



Graph X. From 2019-2020 KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT REPORT



Graph Y. From 2019-2020 KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Why additional resources are needed due to COVID19 to prevent gaps from widening.

A survey from the National Association for the Education of Young Children shows that the pandemic is decreasing access to ECE.^v Nationally, 70% of childcare centers have reported increased costs for staff, supplies, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Tuition increases to make up for these costs have left many families unable to afford ECE. According to NAEYC “for a household with two children in childcare, these tuition increases would result in families paying an additional \$2,112 to \$2,760 per year” and “for a family of four living at the poverty level, the tuition increase alone would amount to 8-11% of their annual income”.^{vi} Revenues are down 49% due to enrollment losses, and 86% of ECE providers are serving fewer students. Many providers have closed, and 40% of providers in NAEYC’s survey say they will close permanently. Moreover, ECE providers of color and families of color seem to be hurt most severely.^{vii}

Local reporting suggests that as of September 2020, 2,000 licensed childcare providers have shuttered in Maryland.^{viii} By passing SB890, Maryland can prevent further loss in access to ECE. Additional state support would reduce the need for tuition increases by helping providers cover operating costs, staff wages and benefits, rent, utilities, insurance, and PPE.^{ix} Moreover, SB890 specifically targets funds to low-income communities. It is critical the state conducts outreach to

raise awareness about the grant. Smaller programs with less administrative capacity will also need technical assistance to have a fair chance of successfully applying. The General Assembly could further support ECE providers by connecting them to state-based business supports and relief funding throughout the pandemic.

There is a significant research base confirming the benefit of quality affordable ECE. Maryland has an opportunity and responsibility to address these inequities for both the short-term recovery and long-term success of Maryland's youngest learners and their families. MAREE strongly encourages the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to give SB890 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

The Members of MAREE

ⁱ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/09/16/474487/early-learning-united-states-2019/>

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ⁱⁱⁱ https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Maryland_YB2019.pdf

^{iv} https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/4/200178_ready5_book_web.pdf

^v https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/blog/raise_tuition_or_close.naeyc.pdf

^{vi} https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_familiespaytheprice.pdf

^{vii} https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf

^{viii} <https://www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/thousands-of-local-child-care-centers-closed-due-to-covid-19/2406310/>

^{ix} https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_familiespaytheprice.pdf