

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
HB 392: Child Care Centers -Early Childhood Screening and Assistance
March 25, 2021**

Position: Support as Amended by the House

The Arc Maryland works to advance the inclusion, rights, and opportunities of people with developmental disabilities. We know that high-quality, coordinated early childhood services are critical for children with developmental delays and disabilities, and fully support the efforts of the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) and the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) to increase access and opportunities for young children with disabilities to learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities.

Federal law requires that children with disabilities have opportunities to meaningfully participate in programs with their non-disabled peers. (i) To meaningfully participate, children may need additional services and supports -some provided through early intervention services or preschool special education and some provided by the early care and education provider.

While more than 19,000 children in Maryland receive early intervention services, many have not yet been identified.

The benefits of the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP) are clear.

- **Maryland's 2018 longitudinal research confirms the benefits of early intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities, with 68% of children returning to general education by 3rd grade. (ii)**

In recognition of that, and the additional awareness needed of child development and the early detection of developmental delays and disabilities, the federal Child Care Developmental Block Grant Act of 2014, required states to provide education information to families, early care and education providers, and the public about developmental screenings.

- In support, the MSDE, in Maryland's current Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan required to receive federal funds, **required all providers receiving CCDF funds to participate in Maryland EXCELS, the quality rating and improvement system, and developed standards for all early care and education providers.**

The Maryland EXCELS standards state: *Developmental screenings are conducted on all children (Birth through age 5) within 90 days of enrollment and at scheduled intervals as determined by MSDE; results are shared with families, and referrals are made when appropriate.*

According to the Division of Early Childhood's website, if a child shows any developmental concerns, the family may decide to seek further evaluation for the child.

There are many free resources (including but not limited to the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program in Maryland) from which to choose, and the child care provider should help the family access those resources.

It is our understanding that this requirement of Maryland EXCELS to screen children was never fully implemented.

This bill seeks to ensure that parents are offered the screening opportunity for their children at least twice a year, and if the screening indicates that further evaluation is needed, the childcare provider will assist the family with making connections critical to obtaining an evaluation.

We thank the sponsor for her submission of this bill, the Ways and Means Committee for their important amendments to strengthen the bill, and we urge a favorable report from the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Sincerely,



Ande Kolp

Executive Director

akolp@thearcmd.org

www.thearcmd.org

- i. 20 USC 1400 (IDEA, Part B, §619).
- ii. Moving Maryland Forward: Building a Birth through Five System of Services for Children with Disabilities and Their Families, MSDE, January 2020, pg. 3.

Additional information can be found here:

https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/maryland_developmental_screeningfaqs.pdf