



**Caring For Maryland's Most  
Important Natural Resource™**

## Maryland State Child Care Association

2810 Carrollton Road  
Annapolis, Md. 21403  
Phone: (410) 820-9196  
Email: [info@mscca.org](mailto:info@mscca.org)  
[www.mscca.org](http://www.mscca.org)

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*The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 4500 members working in the field of early childhood. We believe children are our most important natural resources and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.*

February 3, 2021  
Position: SUPPORT  
HB 597

Ways and Means Committee

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington and members of the esteemed Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony.

Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) fully supports HB 597. MSCCA is grateful for Delegate Kelly's leadership, as well as advocacy in the area of child care. She, and this Committee, are true champions for children and families in Maryland.

Nationally there is a critical workforce shortage in child care which leads to insufficient access for parents to much needed child care programs. Maryland is also experiencing the workforce shortage in this critical need area. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the child care workforce as the risk of exposure has been too great for some teachers, therefore causing even more shortages in the field. Critical workforce shortages impact parent's access to child care.

Insufficient child care negatively impacts not only parents, but employers, and taxpayers when families do not have the child care they need, parents' work productivity falls, resulting in costs to parents, their employers, and, ultimately, taxpayers. Insufficient child care also leads to increases in illegal, unlicensed child care which result in poor outcomes for children.

MSCCA is concerned for children and families as the child care/early childhood workforce is in crisis. Our members have shared frustration and fear as the pool of viable candidates that are qualified as child care teachers in Maryland continues to decline and the timeline for hiring approval process is problematic. Surveys were submitted with our written testimony to provide data that supports the need to find ways to allow businesses to efficiently hire quality child care teachers and expand, not decrease or lessen, qualifications while maintaining the integrity of the current COMAR licensing regulations. MSCCA believes HB 597 creates a way to increase access to quality programs while alleviating some barriers for child care businesses and programs.

HB 597 would establish probationary qualifications for Child Care Teachers in Preschool Centers and School Age Child Care Centers allowing an individual who holds a degree in early childhood education or **specified related fields of study** to qualify as a child care teacher if the individual is enrolled in the 90 hour approved preservice training and successfully completes within 6 months or less after being hired. The small, but important distinction will positively impact the ability of a program to hire quality teachers efficiently. Currently there is no timeframe for approval through Professional Qualification Evaluations from the Office of Child Care. The changes would alleviate some of the need for Office of Child Care variances and would create a better pathway to expedient qualification process. HB 597 would also increase access for families to child care because delays in approval of qualifications to hire staff sometimes results in classrooms remaining closed, potential candidates moving onto other opportunities and confusion in the hiring process. The training becomes meaningful as the degreed teacher is engaged with the children.

Along with requirements for extensive criminal background checks, child care teachers also must complete a medical evaluation, staff orientation and Americans with Disabilities Act training before beginning employment. Currently, Child Care Teachers in Preschool and School Age Child Care Centers and are not required to hold degrees, only be 19 years of age and complete the first 45 of the 90-hour approved certification training. We hope the Committee recognizes HB 597 as a way to address some obstacles in the qualification process by ensuring a probationary period, with accountability measures while continuing to elevate the profession.

Another significant consideration is the alignment and relationship HB 597 begin to establish as the steps to meet with the Kirwan Commission recommendations/Blueprint for Maryland's education legislation related to Prekindergarten teacher qualifications.

Finally, MSCCA's goal is to address the real concerns related to workforce shortages, alleviate barriers, expand qualifications and competencies, build capacity for qualified workforce and encourage career changers to enter into early childhood field, as it is a national and state area of critical need. We believe HB 597 is a step in the right direction.

MSCCA urges a favorable report!

Sincerely,

Christina Peusch

Executive Director