



House Ways and Means Committee

HB 392: Child Care Centers – Early Childhood Screening and Assistance

January 27, 2021

Position: **Support with Amendments**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, Disability Rights Maryland, and The Arc Maryland work 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 opportunity 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 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 [DEC’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 the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program in Maryland, from which to choose, and the child care provider should help the family access those resources. Additional information can be found here:

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

➤ **It is our understanding that this requirement was never implemented.**

While the benefits of early screening and detection are clear, the use of developmental screening tools by all early care and education providers requires public education, a great deal of training and technical assistance, adequate resources, and clear expectations. Therefore, we recommend the following amendment to HB 396, which acknowledges the need for developmental screenings in all early care and education settings, as well as the need for extensive training and technical assistance:

(A)(1) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2022, A LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDER PARTICIPATING IN MARYLAND EXCELS SHALL FACILITATE DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS ON ALL CHILDREN 6 WEEKS THROUGH AGE FIVE.

(2) EACH LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDER SHALL COMPLETE MSDE APPROVED TRAINING ON DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS.

(B) THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHALL:

(1) APPROVE A TRAINING PROGRAM ONLY IF THE PROGRAM DEMONSTRATES BEST PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING;

(2) PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS; AND,

(3) PROMULGATE REGULATIONS TO SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENT THE REQUIREMENTS IN THIS SECTION.

We believe that developmental screenings can be implemented if the required amount of awareness, training, and oversight is provided. **When used appropriately, developmental screenings are an important tool to support children, families, and providers.**

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.