



Testimony Concerning HB 0467

Education-Teacher Certification- Montessori Schools
Submitted to House Ways and Means Committee
Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair

February 6, 2022

Position: Support

Washington Montessori Institute (WMI) supports HB 0467. There are six public Montessori schools in Maryland: three public charter schools in Frederick County and Baltimore City and three public Montessori magnet schools in Prince George's County. These schools serve over 2,125 children. Montessori schools have served as strong contributors to Maryland's public school system and have produced strong academic and social emotional results for the learners. Moreover, these schools provide educational options for parents who may otherwise not be able to afford private education, or may not otherwise be aware of Montessori as an educational option. The goal of this bill is to create a pathway for Montessori teacher certification in the public sector and thereby increase access to affordable, authentic Montessori programs for underserved populations.

Identifying qualified teachers who are graduates of Montessori teacher education programs and meet Maryland's teaching certification remains a challenge for many Montessori schools. The pipeline for these teachers is strained in the public sector due to the double certification requirement. Currently Maryland's certification process does not recognize the Montessori credential. As such, teachers are required to take significant additional coursework on top of their Montessori teaching credential training. This is a serious burden to highly qualified teaching professionals and precludes many from the option to teach in the state's public Montessori programs.

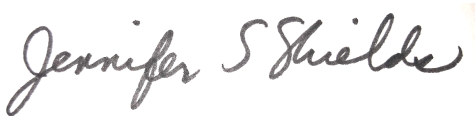
Washington Montessori Institute supports HB 0467 which makes an individual eligible for certification to teach students in a Montessori school as stated in the bill. Since the number of hours and coursework required for Montessori certification and instruction is as rigorous as the state's teaching certification requirements, this bill would merely expand certification requirements to include already highly qualified teaching professionals.

WMI is a non-profit corporation formed in the State of Maryland dedicated to furthering the education objectives, methods, and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. We have trained Montessori teachers for 60 years and have prepared more than 3000 educators who go on to teach in private, public, and charter schools in the DMV, nationally, and internationally. Our center offers the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) diploma. We are approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission and by the Montessori Accreditation Council on Teacher Education (MACTE) which is itself approved by the US Department of Education.

Helping AMI-trained Montessori teachers access teacher certification would make an enormous difference for our public and charter schools and for the children and families they support.

We urge a positive report on HB 0467. Thank you for your consideration.

On behalf of the staff and board of the Washington Montessori Institute,
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer S Shields". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small orange square mark at the end of the line.

Jennifer Shields, M.Ed.
Primary Director of AMI Teacher Training