



1421 Prince St, Ste 350 • Alexandria, VA 22314
703-746-9919 • montessori@amiusa.org • amiusa.org

February 8, 2022

To: Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Ways and Means Chair
Re: Letter of support for HB 0467

Dear Chairperson Atterbeary,

I, Ayize Sabater, am the Executive Director of the Association Montessori International of the USA (AMI/USA) and I am writing to strongly H.B. 0467.

There are several public Montessori schools in Maryland (including: three public charter schools in Frederick County and Baltimore City, and three public Montessori magnet schools in Prince George's County) and this bill would significantly support their educational work. These schools serve over 2,125 children and carry significant wait lists. Montessori schools have served as strong contributors to Maryland's public-school system and have produced strong academic results for Maryland's students for many years. Moreover, these schools provide additional educational options for families. This bill will create a much needed pathway to state teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers which will, in turn increase access to high quality authentic Montessori programs for children from all backgrounds throughout our state.

Currently, Maryland's certification process does not recognize the Montessori credential as part of a pathway to state certification and finding qualified teachers who are Montessori credentialed *and* meet Maryland's teaching certification requirements remains a challenge for many Montessori schools. Thus, this factor appears to problematize the pipeline for these teachers, which is significantly strained in the public sector due to the double certification requirement. As such, our public Montessori programs often have to hire non-Montessori trained teachers which means we are actually putting teachers in a learning environment for which they are not properly prepared. Just as student progress would suffer if a school placed an English teacher in a math classroom, so it creates issues for student learning to place a non-Montessori trained teacher in a Montessori classroom.

We believe that all of our schools need highly qualified teachers in our classrooms. Montessori teacher preparation entails a rigorous graduate level course of study that covers child-development, curriculum and level specific subject matter, observation and assessment, supports for learning differences and culturally responsive teaching in addition to a robust student teaching component. This bill would merely expand certification requirements to include these already highly qualified teaching professionals.

Currently there is no path to state certification for Montessori credential holders, which forces public Montessori programs to have to hire non-Montessori trained teachers who are state certified and then pay for them to take Montessori training while they are teaching. This creates a number of obstacles which short-change our students and our teachers:

- The schools need to use limited funds from their budget to pay for the Montessori training needed;
- Administration has to spend significant personnel resources on coaching and supporting teachers, working in an environment they are unprepared for;



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- Montessori training is rigorous graduate level work and it is taxing for teachers to spend their first 2 years in a Montessori school teaching as well as doing rigorous coursework after school; and,
- Once teachers attain their Montessori credential they do not receive any bump on the pay scale, which, along with the additional preparation needed, disincentivizes recruitment as individuals must undertake the work of becoming Montessori certified with no additional reward.

AMI/USA's mission is dedicated to bringing the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori to the education of children through its support and advancement of the AMI Montessori community in the United States. As a national membership organization, we achieve our mission by providing our over 3,000 Montessori educators and nearly 200 schools with professional development training, networking/problem-solving forums, publications, classroom standards, and access to cutting-edge research. Since the development of the Montessori approach, over 100 years ago, it has proven to be an evidenced-based human developmental approach. AMI/USA believes that in addition to creating a much needed pathway for state certification of Montessori teachers, this bill aligns with existing MSDE requirements that Montessori schools have Montessori trained teachers.

Please give serious consideration to HB 0467, as it can potentially bolster public education for children and families in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Ayize

Ayize Sabater, EdD



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