

BILL: Senate Bill 609
TITLE: Education - Early Childhood Education Teachers - Qualifications
DATE: March 1, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 609 which would make changes to rules governing teacher preparation programs for critically needed teachers in prekindergarten classrooms in public schools and private centers. These programs are to be vastly expanded under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and deserve the attention and reforms contained in this legislation.

All local boards of education value the essential role of the educators and staff persons who work for the public school system as the keys to educating and meeting the needs of our students. Unfortunately, Maryland continues to experience a major teacher shortage due to a number of factors including the low number of teacher candidates graduating from Maryland's universities, the number of potential teachers entering the profession, and the competitiveness of working condition and salaries. Again, MABE greatly appreciates that the Blueprint addresses these issues by mandating minimum salaries of \$60,000 for teachers, providing raises for teachers based on National Board Certification, and reducing the amount of time teachers are obligated to be in classrooms. However, the Blueprint also mandates dramatically expanded full-day prekindergarten programs offered by public schools and private providers. Therefore, MABE appreciates that Senate Bill 609 directly addresses the challenges to broaden opportunities to recruit and prepare more early educators to meet these demands.

MABE has consistently supported efforts by the General Assembly to assist local school systems in addressing the critical shortages of highly qualified teachers, principals, and other staff in every school and the classrooms of all students across the State. At this time, Maryland is experiencing critical shortages across all of the educational and related services professional fields; a critical shortage of the staff needed to deliver and support student learning and to administer schools as educational leaders. Again, the reforms included in Senate Bill 609 closely align with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

On behalf of all local boards, MABE firmly believes that the role of a full complement of qualified staff will be pivotal to the successful implementation of Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint features major expansions of full-day prekindergarten, student behavioral health services, college readiness courses, and career and technical education programs. Passage of Senate Bill 609 will certainly advance the statewide effort to develop the workforce of early educators through the thoughtful expansion of alternative preparation programs.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 609.