



SEIU Local 500

901 Russell Avenue, Suite 300, Gaithersburg, MD 20879

March 1ST, 2023

**RE: Senate Bill 0609 – Education - Early Childhood Education Teachers - Qualifications
Support**

Chairman Feldman and Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members,

Thanks to the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, our state is investing in its youngest citizens by working towards universal Pre-K. In order to accomplish this, a Mixed-Delivery Pre-K system, involving both public schools and private childcare providers, will be needed to accommodate the number of students. In order to attain the goals set by the *Blueprint* for mixed delivery, Maryland must work to remove barriers for private providers to achieve the certifications needed - without needing to sacrifice their businesses.

In order to offer a Pre-Kindergarten program, childcare providers must first be certified through the state of Maryland by a county board. Currently, both Teacher Preparation Programs and Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs require a teacher residency, which are typically run through local school systems that do not offer Pre-Kindergarten classes-- meaning that these Pre-K teachers are completing practicums in K-12 schools, not qualified Pre-Kindergarten programs. Oftentimes, these aspiring teachers are forced to close their doors during this residency as they cannot continue their own childcare operations when placed in a local school system.

Data from MSDE shows that the childcare sector already meets numerous requirements for Pillar 1. Maryland EXCELS reports there are 1,283 level 3,4, and 5 programs participating - plenty to meet the 70/30 recommended split. Additionally, according to MSDE's database 1,993 child care teachers have bachelor's degrees, 403 with masters degrees, 14 with doctorates and 66 with foreign degrees.

Child care providers stand ready to meet the mixed delivery goals in the *Blueprint* but cannot if equitable changes aren't made.

The goals and objectives of this bill are clear. First, it allows institutons of Higher Education or Nonprofit Organizations, in addition to County Board's, to establish an Alternative Teacher Program with approval by the State Superintendent. Second, it ensures that certifications allow

for residencies to be completed in a qualified Pre-Kindergraten Program. Third, it offers an Alternative Certification for Pre-Kindergarten teachers that establishes equivalencies for certain requirements already outlined in the Blueprint, including a competency-based certification and apprenticeships. Finally, it allows for teachers pursuing state certification through a state approved Alternative Preparation Program to meet the high staff qualifications to begin in the 2025-2026 school year.

Thank you for your kind consideration and we ask that you give a favorable report for SB 0609.