



Testimony Concerning SB 609
“Education – Early Childhood Education Teachers – Qualifications”
Submitted to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 1, 2023

Position: Favorable

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 609, which would adjust the requirements for early childhood education (ECE) teacher certification obtained through an alternative preparation program and would establish competency-based certification criteria for pre-K providers. In these ways, the legislation would help address significant barriers to fulfilling the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future’s ambitious and critically important goals for pre-K expansion.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education, as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

The Blueprint states that pre-K teachers shall hold State ECE teaching certification or a bachelor’s degree in any field while they pursue alternative certification beginning in the 2025–26 academic year. Increasing the number of high-quality ECE providers and educators is essential to the Blueprint’s expansion of full-day pre-K for all 4-year-olds and for 3-year-olds from low-income households. The Blueprint mandates a public-private delivery system in which schools partner with high-quality, community-based ECE programs. The importance of public-private delivery is four-fold: it allows school systems to focus funds on instruction rather than enormous new capital costs; it better meets the wrap-around care needs of working parents; it incentivizes the expansion of quality for all children served in the community-based programs, not just the pre-K population; and it avoids undermining the affordability of child care for children birth through age 3.

The proposed adjustments to alternative certification will enable childcare providers to meet certification requirements while maintaining their jobs and keeping their programs operational. This will also help increase the diversity of ECE educators. The establishment of competency-based certification criteria will not diminish quality standards but rather give providers and the State new and necessary flexibility in determining that the standards are met.

MFN urges the Committee’s favorable consideration of SB 609.