



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 5000 professionals working in the field of early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resources and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony in Favor

HB 881- Early Learning Collaboratives- Established and Tax Credits for Contributions

March 1, 2023

Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee

The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is happy to offer our support for HB 881. We thank Delegate Queen for recognizing and addressing the early educator workforce shortage impacting our state, our children, our families and our education system. MSCCA believes children are our more important natural resource. As an organization, it is imperative that we advocate for both children and their families.

MSCCA recognizes that the establishment of Early Learning Collaboratives (ELC) will help accomplish the goal outlined in the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* of a Mixed-Delivery Pre-K system that involves both public schools and private community-based childcare providers. Early Learning Collaboratives will support the successful implementation of quality Pre-K education across the State. The purpose of an ELC is to enable public and private providers to join together to meet the requirements of an 'eligible prekindergarten provider' as laid out in Maryland Code. HB881 would require that private providers that are included in an ELC be licensed in the State and charge the approved per-pupil amount and that MSDE distribute the State and local share of funding to those private providers that are a member of an ELC.

HB881 will have no effect on the high standards required of early childhood educators because the members of ELCs are held to the same standards already outlined in law. They must achieve a quality rating of 3 in the Maryland EXCELS program, submit a plan to achieve a quality 5 rating within 5 years of becoming an eligible provider, and achieve that goal. To help fund this system, individuals may make monetary contributions to help support the costs of the ELC. This donation is to be distributed evenly amongst members. The individual making this donation will be eligible to earn an income tax credit equal to the donated amount. This not only benefits the individual making the donation, but, empowers providers to implement high quality programming.

MSCCA believes that the most equitable and efficient way to expand access to quality child care in the state of Maryland is through direct investments. These investments can include scholarships, subsidies, and refundable tax credits as outlined in this legislation. These public supports will help address affordability and availability issues for Maryland's families. We know that access to quality, affordable childcare leads to better outcomes for Maryland's youngest citizens. We continuously advocate for improvement in funding support.

MSCCA recommends a favorable committee report on HB 881.