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Appropriations Committee

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Committee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 888 Testimony – Education – Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation
Program – Authorization and Reporting
March 1, 2023
Ways and Means Committee**

Good afternoon Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, Esteemed Colleagues. Thank you for the opportunity to present today on my legislation – Education – Prekindergarten Alternative Teacher Preparation Program – Authorization and Reporting.

We are thrilled that the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future sets the groundwork for universal Pre-K, setting our youngsters on a path to success early on. To meet the goals set by the Blueprint, a mixed-delivery system is needed that incorporates public schools and private childcare providers. Private childcare providers face unique barriers in achieving their certifications often at the expense of their businesses. To best meet the needs of students, families, and providers, Maryland must look to alternate pathways for certification.

Currently, childcare providers must be certified through the state of Maryland by a county board to offer a Pre-Kindergarten program. As part of both Teacher Preparation Programs and Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs, participants must complete a teacher residency, typically through a local K-12 school system, not a qualified Pre-K program. To accommodate such placements, childcare providers often must close their own childcare operations, further contributing to the childcare crisis.

Childcare providers are poised to meet the mixed delivery needs in the Blueprint with many already meeting numerous requirements for Pillar 1. MSDE’s database shows that 1,993 childcare teachers have bachelor’s degrees, 403 have master’s degrees, 14 have doctorates, and 66 have foreign degrees. And, according to Maryland EXCELS, there are 1,283 level 3, 4, and 5 programs participating, enough to meet the 70/30 split.

HB 888 expands what entities can establish an Alternative Teacher Program from just county boards to include institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations with approval by the State Superintendent. It also ensures that certifications allow practicums to be completed in qualified Pre-K programs. This bill also 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. HB 833 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.

Much of these changes outlined in HB 888 is included in Governor's Moore bill, HB 1219, and we are in complete support of it and its commitment to ensuring a mixed delivery system. In conversations with school officials, child care providers, and members of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) we learned of several challenges that exist to creating a viable network of diverse child care settings, including child care providers access to health insurance and higher wages. As such, we are introducing an amendment to establish a study to explore the ways to create parity between our school system and private childcare facility programs. To offer the best for our young Marylanders, we need to support their educators, no matter which type of provider or school they work for.

As you can see from the testimony submitted and the witnesses with us today, this bill is supported by childcare centers, family day care homes, community leaders, and parents. This bill establishes a realistic path to meeting the goals of the Blueprint by considering the various needs of our students, parents, and teachers. I ask for a favorable report on HB 888.