



**Testimony Concerning HB 770**  
**“Publicly Funded Full-Day Prekindergarten Program - Tier I Child –**  
**Alteration of Definition”**  
**Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee**  
**February 22, 2023**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports HB 770, which would alter the definition of “Tier I children” who may be given priority for enrollment in a full-day prekindergarten program to include children with disabilities, children who are experiencing homelessness, and children who are from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language.

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 and prekindergarten policies and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future makes publicly funded full-day pre-K available free of charge to all 3- and 4-year-olds whose families earn at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (\$83,250 for a family of four in 2022) and whose parents choose to enroll them. (Unlike kindergarten, pre-K enrollment is voluntary, not compulsory.) Children from families meeting this income-eligibility criterion are designated as “Tier I” children and given enrollment priority on a more advanced timeline than Tier II and Tier III children, whose families earn more 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

MFN believes it was always the intention of the Kirwan Commission and the General Assembly to also prioritize pre-K enrollment for students with disabilities regardless of income, students experiencing homelessness, and students from homes in which English is not the primary spoken language. Bill language to that effect appears elsewhere in the Blueprint legislation but was omitted from the technical definition of “Tier I” children. HB 770 amends the Tier I definition to include these additional priority categories, which MFN considers a very important clarification.

MFN urges your favorable consideration.

