

BILL: House Bill 1385
TITLE: Early Childhood Education - Prekindergarten Providers - Resident and Conditional Teaching Certificates
DATE: March 6, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1385 to make meaningful improvements to the statewide system of providing points of entry and pathways for the employment and continuing education of highly qualified early educators in prekindergarten classrooms.

MABE supports the key provisions of this bill which would clarify that long-established resident teacher and conditional teachers license be available as options for educators in prekindergarten. Specifically, the bill would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish (1) a resident early childhood teaching certificate for an individual who is beginning a career in early childhood education and (2) a conditional early childhood teaching certificate for an individual applying to work in an eligible prekindergarten program that is unable to fill an open teaching position with a teacher who meets the standard qualifications. MABE believes this is a reasonable framework to help ensure parallel points of access to individuals pursuing their credentials as a licensed teacher in Maryland and desiring to teach in the earliest grades.

All local boards of education value the essential role of the educators and staff persons who work for the public school system as the keys to educating and meeting the needs of our students. Therefore, MABE has consistently supported efforts by the General Assembly to assist local school systems in addressing the critical shortages of highly qualified teachers, principals, and other staff in every school and the classrooms of all students across the State. At this time, Maryland is experiencing critical shortages across all of the educational and related services professional fields; a critical shortage of the staff needed to deliver and support student learning and to administer schools as educational leaders.

In the 2023 legislative session, MABE supported the Governor's Educator Shortage Reduction Act (HB 1219, Ch. 627). The Educator Shortage Act became law and included major initiatives to expand the alternative teacher certification program to include educators in prekindergarten programs, create a new Maryland Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity Dashboard, reform the Teachers Fellows for Maryland scholarship program. IN 2024, MABE continues to support legislation to appropriately expand opportunities for talented individuals, with a range of professional and education backgrounds, to pursue teaching careers. MABE believes that passing House Bill 1385 will significantly advance the work already underway to expand the scope of educational opportunities for individuals to become highly qualified teachers.

Local boards firmly believe that the role of a full complement of qualified staff, including large numbers of new teachers, will be pivotal to the successful implementation of Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint features major expansions of full-day prekindergarten, student behavioral health services, college readiness courses, and career and technical education programs. Passage of House Bill 1385 will certainly advance the statewide effort to recruit, educate, and retain the professional educators essential to meet these objectives.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1385.