

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 500 - Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund - Alterations

DATE: February 14, 2024

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would like to express support for **SB 500**.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the child care workforce has seen increased difficulty with high turnover rates and continuing challenges with employee retention. As a result, MSDE is committed to creating robust and innovative ways to promote recruitment and retention in child care programs, while enhancing the initiatives previously in place, in order to rebuild a stronger workforce. Increasing the hours for the service commitment for the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) from at least 10 hours per week to the proposed 20 hours per week would elevate the continued effort for this established initiative. Also, the increase in service hours would result in extended coverage from qualified staff, which assists programs in meeting teacher-child ratios, potentially decreasing the number of supervision and safety violations programs received when programs are facing understaffing challenges.

HB 600 also prioritizes awards through the CCCPDF for applicants that have not completed any college coursework or have been accepted by an accredited college or university that offers their native language or bilingual coursework in early childhood education or a related field. This proposed change would give students the same starting advantage as their English-speaking counterparts, which could also lead to an increase in applicants who not only complete the program but do so within the intended timeframe that it takes to complete an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree. CCCPDF recipients would also benefit from learning in an environment surrounded by peers who face the same challenges and barriers, which can result in an increased support system.

It is important to ensure that MSDE is working to build a stronger workforce that is diverse and inclusive of all. An increase in the diversity of CCCPDF applicants will ultimately lead to a more diverse early care and education workforce. The children and the families served will benefit from this as they will have an increased chance of being served by CCCPDF participants that face challenges like their own.

Families who speak a home language other than English may have an increased level of comfort and security beginning with enrollment and enduring throughout their time in early care education programs.

For those reasons, the State Board and MSDE request a favorable committee report on SB 500. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.