



**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 members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony: HB 662 Large Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers-Child Care Centers-Child Care Teachers- Minimum Age Submitted to: Education, Energy and Environment Committee March 20, 2024

Maryland State Child Care Association enthusiastically supports HB 662 and we thank sponsor, Delegate Guyton for her leadership and support of the child care workforce, women, children and families.

HB 662 is an important piece of legislation that establishes a minimum age of 18 years old for child care teachers. This change will not impact the numerous, additional required staff qualifications, however, will have a positive impact by expanding opportunities for the workforce in early childhood, while also supporting steps to address the critical workforce shortages, and even better- is done without a fiscal note.

HB 662 will help build capacity and a qualified workforce pipeline. The bill keeps the 90 hour certification, and all of the other many staff requirements in place for child care teachers in centers, only changing/re-establishing the minimum age.

COMAR has many requirements for Child Care Teachers, and we support the continuation of them including, 90 clock hours or equivalent of approved early childhood coursework and 3 semesters, 45 clock hours or the equivalent of approved infant/toddler coursework, as well as the 1 year of experience working with infants/toddlers and/or preschoolers in an approved setting or the equivalencies determined by MSDE and specified in COMAR.

Child care is an economic and equity imperative and is the workforce behind the workforce. Maryland must build capacity for the child care workforce as child care is experiencing critical workforce shortages. HB 662 expands growth and career opportunities for aides working in child care programs, as well as high school students participating in CDA programs across the state to become child care teachers.

HB 662 will help support recruitment and retention of workforce and higher compensation, which are barriers facing the child care industry.

In January 2021, job postings on Indeed were back to pre-pandemic levels for child care roles, and they have remained above pre-pandemic levels ever since. In fact, according to Indeed data, by September 2023, child care job postings on Indeed were still more than 50 percent above their pre-pandemic levels. The number of job postings for child care positions is much higher, relative to pre-pandemic levels, than other pandemic-affected roles, such as retail and sales. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as many as 100,000 Americans have been forced to stay home from work each month because of child care problems. The economic toll now amounts to \$122 billion each year in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.

Child care teachers in centers have strict ratios and capacities. Child Care Centers cannot mix infants with preschoolers. However, Family Child Care in COMAR are allowed two infants/toddlers mixed with preschool age children (and school agers) with the minimum age requirement at all at age 18 years old without prior experience and without a HS diploma or the 90 hour certification requirements.

01. Minimum Age. To be approved as a family child care provider, an individual shall be 18 years old or older.
INTENT: Setting a minimum age of 18 increases the chance that the Provider will be mature enough to handle the responsibilities associated with caring for other people's children. In addition, Maryland law (the Commercial Law Article, §1-103) requires a person to be at least 18 years old to enter into a contract. This requirement is pertinent to family day care because the Provider must establish written service agreements with parents. Note: If there is a question about the Provider's age, the Provider must produce proof of age such as a driver's license, birth certificate, or passport.

This bill just expands the workforce pool related to child care teachers in centers and does not deviate from the Family Child Care regulations which allows for the 4,800 licensed/registered Family Child Care provider, who work alone to have maximum of 8 children of mixed and very different age groups with no experience and less training with a minimum age of 18 years old, this bill far exceeds staff qualifications for center child care teachers at age 18. Family child care provides care and education to over 40,000 children and the standard is 18 years old without the additional requirements put upon child-care center teachers. This is inequitable and the only reason provided by MSDE is that they use Caring for Our Children as guidelines which recommends age 19, however they did not use the same Caring for Our Children guidelines for those 6,000 family child care providers caring for more than 40,000 children. This bill is straightforward and supports equity and quality for it does not change the additional qualifications required under COMAR, only minimum age.

HB 662 takes basic, necessary steps toward recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce and building capacity while still maintaining strict staff qualifications and ratios in centers to support Maryland's working families.

MSCCA urges a favorable report.