

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
11 Bladen Street, 2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB662 – Large Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers - Child Care Teachers - Minimum Age – Support**

Dear Chair Feldman:

KinderCare Learning Companies, operating 35 centers and 22 before- and after-school sites serving over 4,700 children across Maryland, strongly support HB662, altering the age requirement for an eligible individual to teach in an early learning center from 19 years old to 18 years old. The legislation, introduced by Delegate Guyton, will support early childhood education (ECE) by allowing providers to recruit interested candidates entering the workforce upon graduating from high school.

KinderCare applauds the state's efforts to expand access and affordability to ECE programs through increased investments in preschool and the child care scholarship program. However, expanded access to ECE hinges on the industry's ability to attract and retain qualified ECE professionals. Reports reveal at least 100,000 fewer ECE professionals across the United States than before the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> This must begin attracting new candidates into the ECE field.

As such, it is essential to consider teacher eligibility to recruit new candidates into the ECE field and offer training and credentialing as they explore the ECE profession. Lowering the minimum age requirement of eligible teachers from 19 to 18 years old would allow for the recruitment of high school graduates in this transitional time of their lives when many are already searching for jobs. By expanding the eligibility of the ECE workforce, the state is investing in its economy and addressing ways to eliminate labor shortages that affect all sectors.

Failing to make this critical policy change continues to put the ECE industry at a disadvantage with other sectors that can put 18 year olds at this crucial junction in their professional and educational careers. Instead, HB662 would further support and identify avenues to expedite the state's goals and commitment to helping working families, increasing accessibility for our youngest learners, and supporting the childcare workforce.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/us/child-care-worker-shortage.html?smid=tw-share>



5005 MEADOWS RD, SUITE 200  
LAKE OSWEGO, OR 97035

For these reasons, KinderCare strongly supports HB662, and we respectfully request your vote to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'R Shewbridge'.

Rylie Shewbridge  
Government Relations Representative  
KinderCare Learning Companies