

March 18, 2024

**Testimony in Support of HB 600/SB 500
Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund - Alterations
Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee**

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Thank you for supporting **HB 600/SB 500 Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund – Alterations**. Passage of this legislation will open much-needed opportunities for early childhood educators and the families counting on us. This bill calls for:

- updating the qualifications for an award from the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund to include a service obligation to work in an approved child care setting for at least 20 hours per week;
- requiring the Office of Child Care at MSDE to prioritize grant awards to applicants who have not completed any college courses for credit;
- allowing an applicant to have attended or be accepted to an accredited college or university outside of Maryland and here is why that is especially important: there are schools from coast to coast *but not in Maryland* that offer native language or bilingual coursework in early childhood education or a related field. Ensuring Maryland's educators can access education in their most confident language is a big step forward for equity, language justice, ensuring meaningful experiences for early childhood educators and families.

I currently receive funding from the CCCPDF and it is really important to me. I have been working towards my teaching certification in Early Childhood Education and hope to stay in this field by teaching preschool in my family child care program. I am hoping that the qualifications that are being updated do not cause me difficulty by fulfilling a service obligation outside of my child care program. I also hope that the prioritization doesn't take away the funding from me. I currently have a B.S. in Marine Sciences and really want to continue and finish this program. I am committed to teaching and caring for young children and hope I will get the chance to continue my education.

Children experience healthy child development that is crucial for success in school and in life, in family child care, centers, and school-based early childhood programs. Knowing this, the Kirwan Commission and the "Blueprint" legislation stood strong on a mixed delivery approach to delivering preK. That means having preK available in schools AND in child care centers and family child care.

Implementation has been challenging for school districts for a variety of reasons. To ensure mixed delivery and meaningful teacher preparation, we must value the strengths and competencies of the existing workforce. We must look at the path to certification, and this legislation is another part of that. We must strengthen the laws and the real options so that parents can choose what's best for their family, and the whole community benefits from partnering with early childhood educators in child care programs.

Thanks to the leadership of the General Assembly, we will achieve goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and the goals of families and educators right in our neighborhoods.

Thank you for hearing our voice in laws that affect our work.

Thank you,

Jessica Patrick