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**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 Childcare Career and Professional Development Fund to include a service obligation to work in an approved childcare setting for at least 20 hours per week;
- requiring the Office of Childcare 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.

Teachers who are awarded the Childcare Career and Professional Development Fund should have an obligation to work at least 20 hours per week in a childcare program. We do not want to discredit any of our experienced staff who do not have any college credits, and this is why we believe the Office of Childcare at MSDE should prioritize these applicants. There are many teachers who have experience and are not able to take college classes.

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 childcare 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 the 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.