
TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: HB 1475 - State Department of Education – Office of Child Care Advisory Council- Publicly Funded Pre-K – Analysis and Report

DATE: April 02, 2025

POSITION: Letter of Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding House Bill (HB) 1475 - State Department of Education – Office of Child Care (OCC) Advisory Council – Publicly Funded Pre-K – Analysis and Report. This legislation requires the OCC Advisory Council to conduct an analysis and report of the mixed delivery, publicly funded pre-kindergarten system established under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, and generally relating to an analysis of the mixed delivery, publicly funded pre-kindergarten program.

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) anticipates that House Bill (HB) 1475 will have an impact on the agency in that the Office of Child Care (OCC) Advisory Council consists of voluntary members who meet every quarter to discuss a multitude of child care-related concerns, not just one specified topic. The proposed bill would lead to the meeting only addressing the publicly funded prekindergarten analysis and the report, and possibly lead to the need for council members to volunteer additional time to meet the bill's stipulations. The council members consist of legislators, physicians, child care providers, and other government officials, many of whom may be subjected to time constraints associated with meeting the demands of their full-time positions. In addition, the agency staff member assigned to assist in the preparation of the council meetings cannot take on another function without removing duties assigned based on the current MS22. As a result of the proposed bill, the assigned staff member may need to increase their allotted time to support the proposed legislation, or an additional FTE may be required to meet the requirements of the council, as determined by HB 1475.

In addition, on September 15, 2024, MSDE and the Maryland Department of Commerce conducted a blind survey of public and private prekindergarten and child care providers and submitted a report to the budget committees detailing the findings from the survey and the options to address the identified barriers. The survey requested information about the factors preventing providers from participating in publicly funded prekindergarten programs and the reasons that providers choose not to participate.

Please also note that the OCC Advisory Council's current duties consist of the following per Md. Code, Educ. § 9.5-804:

The Council shall:

- (1) Advise and counsel the Early Childhood Development Division of the Department;
- (2) Review regulations proposed by State agencies regulating child care to ensure coordination and consistency;
- (3) Review issues and problems relating to care of children and suggest priorities for consideration by the Early Childhood Development Division; and
- (4) Identify interdepartmental issues of importance to child care providers and users that should be

addressed by the Early Childhood Development Division and other State agencies.

Currently, OCC Advisory Council quarterly meetings include child care updates from the team and the opportunity for the child care community to ask the directors questions about “all things” concerning child care in real time, which will no longer be an option due to the discontinuation of the meeting for frequent guests and attendees. The information shared during typical meetings is considered highly valuable and applicable to child care; this will no longer be the platform for a considerable amount of time, leaving the Early Childhood Community with a limited number of opportunities to have questions answered regularly. MSDE would like to refrain from creating a narrative that Pre-K is more important than the other concerns regarding care for children under 5 years of age. Noting that there is an overwhelming number of constituents who fear that Pre-K funding hurts private providers who do not participate and decreases the options for families seeking care for children under 2 years of age.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 1475**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and External Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504, if you would like any additional information.