



**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Testimony:** HB1475 – Office of Child Care Advisory Council - Publicly Funded Prekindergarten - Analysis and Report (Mixed Delivery Model Viability Act)

**Organization:** Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD

**Submitting:** Laura Salganik, Chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**Hearing Date:** April 2, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Jewish Community Relations Council is submitting this testimony in favor of HB1475, which requires the Office of Child Care Advisory Council within MSDE to conduct an analysis of the mixed delivery, publicly funded full-day prekindergarten delivery system.

Our Jewish tradition teaches us that we are obligated to work to improve the world and to help our neighbors in need. At present, the need for prekindergarten options is great – the number of child care slots available in Maryland has declined since the pandemic -- and it is even greater for parents with a low income. According to Maryland Family Network, the average annual cost for a 2–4-year-olds is about \$12,000 for family day care and \$14,000 in center-based day care. That is simply unaffordable for most single parents and for a large percentage of married parents. Existing programs such as Head Start and the Maryland Childcare Scholarship Program go only so far to meet this need.

Prekindergarten education has consistently been shown to improve children’s chances for success in school (as well as keeping them safe while their parents are at work). Further, a robust child care system is essential for our economy to thrive. Recent estimates of how much Maryland’s economy loses because of lack of stable, affordable child care are in the billions.

Recognizing its importance, the Maryland Blueprint called for “expanding voluntary prekindergarten for all three- and four-year-old children from families earning incomes at or below 300% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)” through a mixed-delivery model, with a phased-in goal of having 50 percent of the slots served through the program be in private-provider setting by 2026-7.

But it isn’t a simple process, as Maryland has learned during early implementation. None of the state’s providers have come anywhere close to meeting this goal. A careful analysis of how to combine private and public providers in a mixed delivery system – as called for in this bill – is an essential first step to a prekindergarten system that both supports economic growth in Maryland and helps our neighbors in need.

The Jewish community also has a particular interest in the separation of church and state. With many existing privately child care providers connected to religious institutions, we hope the study will include issues related to maintaining this separation in education.

We urge the committee to give a favorable report to this important legislation.