



April 2, 2025

HB 1475

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

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE w/ Amendment

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this supporting testimony with amendments to House Bill 1475. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. There are more than 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

House Bill 1475 would require the Office of Child Care Advisory Council within the State Department of Education to conduct an analysis of the mixed delivery, publicly funded prekindergarten system established under Title 7, Subtitle 1A of the Education Article. The analysis would result in recommendations for changes to regulations, policies, and procedures to increase the efficacy of the publicly funded prekindergarten program and to make the program more equitable for providers and families. A report to the General Assembly would be due by December 31, 2027.

Nonpublic school prekindergarten providers have received mixed-delivery prekindergarten expansion grant sites in the first round of expansion in 2022, winning competitive grant bids for programs to provide prekindergarten to four-year-old children whose family income is 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL) or lower. Nonpublic providers have the capacity to offer high quality seats at our programs and are enthused to continue to partner with the state of Maryland in advancing the educational vision of the Kirwan Commission through mixed-delivery prekindergarten expansions. That is why 50% of slots are dedicated to private providers in the Blueprint prekindergarten expansion.

These sites include Catholic schools who are partnering with the State of Maryland to provide high-quality prekindergarten to low-income students. Catholic providers have long participated in and supported prekindergarten expansion in Maryland. All three of (arch)dioceses serving Maryland have a strong commitment to education. Within the State of Maryland, there are approximately 120 prekindergarten programs in Catholic schools or

parishes, in addition to Headstart programs. Nearly all are accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by MSDE and a vast majority of them employ state-certified prekindergarten teachers. Many are EXCELS level three, four and five-rated. However, some added flexibility for expansion sites would certainly accelerate Maryland's ambitious prekindergarten expansion goals.

A strong prekindergarten education has been proven to greatly enhance a child's educational trajectory. Like early childhood care, it is also an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families. Prekindergarten availability also helps to empower working parents with workplace access, an imperative part of combating poverty.

If this legislative body wants to expand the participation of high-quality faith-based providers participating in Blueprint expansion, we respectfully urge the analysis provided for through this legislation to include a review of the requirements for faith-based providers in the law, with a view toward ascertaining in particular if those provisions are deterring high-quality programs from applying for expansion grants.

Amendment to House Bill SB 1475 (Third Reader Reprint)

Amendment No. 1

On Page 3, line 22 of the House Third Reader Reprint, insert:

“(15) A review of the provisions of § 7-1A-04(c) relative to faith-based providers and opportunities to engage and recruit more faith-based community providers already operating EXCELS-rated high quality prekindergarten programs to apply for expansion grants.”