

# **Arileidy Ledesma - SB0857.pdf**

Uploaded by: Arileidy Ledesma

Position: FAV

## English Version

My name is Arileidy Ledesma, and I live in Montgomery County. I am a mother of three children, and my youngest son, Ean, is 4 years old.

Ean is a sweet and bright child who has been receiving speech therapy for over a year. More than two years ago, I realized that he needed more support than I could provide at home. However, finding a suitable and financially accessible program was an enormous challenge. The lack of clear information about access to these services and the shortage of pre-K spots made the process even more difficult. There was no pre-K spot available for my son; they were all taken. I felt desperate.

After months of struggle—going from office to office, insisting that my son needed to attend preschool—I finally secured a spot for Ean in the Preschool Education Program (PEP), where he attends only two and a half hours a day. Despite the limited time, I have seen significant progress in my son—he now speaks more and interacts better. **I am grateful, but this is NOT enough.**

Parents and caregivers support SB0857. We want the state to facilitate access to grants for private providers to allow the expansion of pre-K programs in community-based centers. This would ensure that children like Ean and thousands of others do **NOT** miss the opportunity to attend full-time pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Access to preschool directly impacts not only our children's development but also the economic and social well-being of our families and society in general. We want equal opportunities for all.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

## Spanish version

Mi nombre es Arileidy Ledesma y vivo en Montgomery County. Soy madre de tres hijos, y mi hijo menor, Ean, tiene 4 años.

Ean es un niño lindo e inteligente que ha estado recibiendo terapia del lenguaje por más de un año. Desde hace más de dos años, supe que necesitaba más apoyo del que yo podía brindarle en casa, pero encontrar un programa adecuado y accesible económicamente fue un enorme desafío. La falta de información clara sobre el acceso a estos servicios y la escasez de plazas de prekínder hicieron que el proceso fuera aún más difícil. No había un puesto de prekínder para mi hijo; todos estaban ocupados. Llegué a sentirme desesperada.

Después de varios meses de lucha, yendo de oficina en oficina, insistiendo en que mi hijo necesitaba ir al preescolar, finalmente conseguí un cupo para Ean en el Programa de Educación Preescolar (PEP), donde asiste solo dos horas y media al día. A pesar del tiempo limitado, he visto grandes avances en mi hijo: ahora habla más y se desenvuelve mejor. Estoy agradecida, pero esto NO es suficiente.

Las madres y padres apoyamos la ley SB0857. Queremos que el estado facilite el acceso a grants a proveedores privados que permitan la expansión de prekinder en centros educativos comunitarios. Esto se traduce en que niños como Ean y miles de otros NO pierdan la oportunidad de acceder al prekínder 3 y 4 de tiempo completo. El acceso al preescolar impacta directamente no solo el desarrollo de nuestros hijos, sino también el bienestar económico y social de nuestras familias y comunidades. Queremos igualdad de oportunidades para todos.

Gracias por escuchar mi testimonio.

# **SB 857 testimony support MSCCA March 5 pdf mga.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christina Peusch

Position: FAV



**Caring For Maryland's Most  
Important Natural Resource™**

## **Maryland State Child Care Association**

2810 Carrollton Road  
Annapolis, Md. 21403  
Phone: (410) 820-9196  
Email: [info@mscca.org](mailto:info@mscca.org)  
[www.mscca.org](http://www.mscca.org)

---

*The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 5500 members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.*

---

### **Testimony: SB 857 Child Care Prekindergarten Expansion Modifications and Workgroup Submitted to: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

**March 5, 2025**

Maryland State Child Care Association enthusiastically supports SB 857.

SB 857 addresses important challenges for community-based Prekindergarten programs.

Consideration must be given to the unintended consequences, numerous barriers, and inequities in the Blueprint for Maryland's Education-Pillar 1 along with the additional layers of challenges that prohibit many early childhood programs from participating in public PreK mixed delivery system. If we want to support working families and we want to achieve a true mixed delivery system with diverse teachers and quality options for parents to choose what best meets their family's needs, we must recognize, understand the unintended consequences to alleviate the barriers to ensure Blueprint recommendations are met.

Public schools' policies and practices are very different from those in regulated childcare settings. While public schools and community-based programs fall under the authority of MSDE, they are not the same. The language and terminology used in public schools are very different from those used in community-based programs. The regulations are different. The oversight is different. The funding is different. The staff qualifications are different. The workload is different. The length of the workday is different. The interactions and relationships with families are different.

Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of child care operating expenses and budgeting. Most community-based programs are funded solely through tuition paid for by parents and families. Families can only afford to pay so much for high quality child care. Childcare costs are in the top three household expenses for families with young children. The true cost of infant care is unaffordable for most families. To compensate for this, community-based programs set tuition rates for children birth – 2 at less than the actual cost of care. To balance the budget and cover program operating expenses, community-based programs set tuition rates for 3- and 4-year-olds higher than the actual cost of care. This distributes the total operating costs more equitably across age groups. However, if 4-year-olds leave community-based programs to attend public school prekindergarten, there will be devastating financial costs for families of children birth-3 years old. Most community-based programs will not be able to afford to stay in business. Most community-based programs operate on razor thin margins. Anything that adds to their operating expenses, or decreases revenue, e.g. pandemic shutdowns, will significantly harm a program's ability to balance their budget.

The timeline for when the grant RFPs are released, and funding decisions are distributed does not align with the operational timeline of community-based programs.

Most community-based programs begin registration for the following school year in January or February. MSDE typically releases the grant application in the spring. There has been no consistent release date for this grant. While it is typically released in March or April, the grant has been released in February and May.

The turn-around time for funding decisions can take 4-6 weeks from the submission due date. By the time the grant application is released, most programs have already enrolled in their 3- and 4-year-old classrooms. A community-based program that wants to participate in Blueprint cannot afford to reserve slots on the speculation that they might receive grant funds, so those slots go to self pay families.

The timeline for when the grant RFPs are released, and funding decisions are distributed does not align with the operational timeline of community-based programs. For community-based programs currently participating in Blueprint and applying for a renewal grant, the wait time for receiving a Notification of grant award (NOGA) is very difficult. They have already enrolled grant eligible children, yet they cannot guarantee free tuition for families without the Notice of Grant Award. When the grant is not released until late spring, and NOGAs aren't issued until July, some families will leave the community-based program and enroll elsewhere (mostly public school) due to a lack of guarantee of funding. This legislation will address these challenges.

The terminology in the grant application does not align with the terminology used in community-based programs. LEAs have a grants office and much administrative support to complete the RFP. Their grant writers are familiar with the language. MSDE releases a Prekindergarten Programs Operating Manual AFTER programs receive their NOGA. Often there are new rules or requirements included in this manual that were NOT specified requirements in the grant application. It's like changing the rules in the middle of the game.

For many families attending community-based programs, even with free tuition, when a slot opens in a public prekindergarten, the family leaves and sends their child to public school. For many MSDE certified prekindergarten teachers working in community-based programs, when a teaching position opens in public school, they leave the program to teach in public school. Better benefits, shorter working hours, more resources, and more support provided by LEAs are contributing factors. This only exacerbates the staffing crisis in community-based programs.

When families at 600% above FPL can participate through a sliding scale, the competition between LEAs and community-based programs will only increase. This has the potential to lead to more community-based programs going out of business. Without child care, there will be an increase in unlicensed, unregulated care. This is detrimental to children and families with poor outcomes. Enrollment challenges include, when a community-based program is awarded a grant, they do so in good faith with the expectation they will meet their stated enrollment numbers. However, families may be transient for a variety of reasons. When a family leaves during the school year, it is very difficult for the community-based program to fill that slot. Currently, Prekindergarten slots must be 85% enrolled by December 31. If enrollment is less than that, MSDE reduces the program's funding by the number of slots not enrolled. The program, however, still must maintain all grant expectations, including teacher salaries. As noted previously, operating margins in community-based programs are razor thin. Any loss in funding can be catastrophic to the program's operating budget. The program is penalized for something that is out of their control. It is exponentially more devastating when a family leaves mid-year to enroll in a public-school program.

SB 857 will move towards equity in mixed delivery of Prekindergarten and support growth by establishing a workgroup to understand the many unintended consequences and challenges for community-based providers and programs to participate.

MSCCA urges a favorable report.



# **SEIU Local 500 - SB857 - Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elly Colmers

Position: FAV



Hearing Testimony March 5, 2025  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Service Employees International Union, Local 500

SB857

Child Care – Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup

SUPPORT

SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty and Staff at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. We urge a FAVORABLE Report on SB857 –Child Care – Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup.

SB857 proposes changes to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grants the use the funds in ways that will ensure a balanced and inclusive approach to early childhood education. The proposed changes to the grant process, including the addition of slots for more children without supplanting vital child care slots for infants and toddlers, and the inclusion of new instructions and terminology, are critical steps in strengthening our child care and early education systems.

First and foremost, it is crucial to recognize that child care for infants and toddlers is a foundational component of early childhood development. These years are a critical period for cognitive, social, and emotional growth, and the availability of safe, high-quality care during this time is indispensable for the well-being and future success of our children. The need for more infant and toddler slots cannot be overstated. As we focus on expanding access to prekindergarten programs, we must ensure that these changes do not inadvertently reduce the availability of care for younger children, who are at a stage of development that requires unique attention and support.

By ensuring that the Prekindergarten Expansion Grants are structured in a way that prioritizes the creation of additional prekindergarten slots without compromising infant and toddler care, we can create a more holistic approach to child care that addresses the needs of families with children at all ages. This balance will not only support children's development but will also provide parents with the stability and security they need to work, knowing that their children are receiving care that is tailored to their developmental stages.

The proposal for the State Department of Education to establish a multiyear grant award process is another essential step forward. This long-term approach will help providers plan effectively, ensuring

sustainability and continuity in care offerings. A multiyear process provides the stability necessary for providers to grow and enhance their programs without the uncertainty that comes with yearly grant applications. This will also allow the department to allocate resources more strategically, targeting areas of need and ensuring that services are distributed equitably across communities.

Furthermore, the recommendation to convene a workgroup to explore and recommend opportunities to incentivize the growth of child care providers, particularly those offering slots for infants and toddlers, is vital. By encouraging the expansion of care options for the youngest children, we can not only support families but also help ensure that the workforce in the child care industry is trained and equipped to meet the evolving needs of the children they care for. These incentives can help bring more providers into the field, increase the quality of care, and support the workforce in an industry that has long been underappreciated.

In conclusion, the proposed changes to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grants represent a thoughtful and balanced approach to addressing the critical needs of children, families, and child care providers. I strongly urge the committee to move forward with these changes, as they will ensure that both early education and infant and toddler care are prioritized in a way that supports the growth and success of all children in our state.

We respectfully request a favorable report on SB857

# **Testimony 2025 SB0857 AAUW-Maryland.pdf**

Uploaded by: Judy A. Carbone

Position: FAV



**TO:** Maryland General Assembly, House of Delegates, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** American Association of University Women of Maryland  
Submitted by Judy A. Carbone, Co-Vice President, Public Policy, AAUW Maryland, and President, AAUW-Garrett Branch  
*301-616-5036, judy@corgi-cottage.com*

**DATE:** 3 March 2025

**RE:** **Testimony in Support of SB0857** - Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup

Founded in 1881, national AAUW's approximately 170,000 members and 1,000 branches nationwide are leaders in gender equity research, advocacy, and education. In Maryland, our members and supporters and our college and university partners are strong advocates for laws that promote the well-being of women and families.

As such, we write to you today to ask for your favorable report on SB0857 - Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup.

In December 2024, the Comptroller of Maryland released a report entitled "State of the Economy Series: Child Care and the Economy". It released clear findings that Maryland's economy is being negatively affected by a lack of available child care spots, especially for pre-K children, which keep women in particular from participating in the labor market. Emphasis on finding solutions to these issues must be a part of the plan to increase the strength and robustness of the Maryland economy.

A summary of key findings from this brief include (note: full citations for the findings are included in the report, see citation below):

- Women in the age group of 25-45 now have a higher Labor Participation Rate (LPR) than prior to the pandemic, with single moms with children only under 6 years old seeing large gains. However, women with only young children still lag behind women without children and far behind men with young children in terms of LPR.
- There has been a steady and sustained decline in family care providers in Maryland, which likely affects infants the most, as well as toddlers. While overall capacity, or slots,

for children under 5 years old is unchanged from 2020 to 2024, it is unclear if there have been variations in capacity among the three age groups under 5: infants (0-18 months), toddlers (18-24 months), and preschoolers (2-4 years old).

- There is a decline in standalone child care centers and an increase in licensed child care centers within larger organizations like private schools and multiservice nonprofit organizations.
- State policy, including the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is driving shifts in the provision of care for 3- and 4-year-olds (who are now eligible for state-funded Pre-K) and children 5 and older enrolled in before and after school programs in Maryland.
- The types of businesses operating child care centers appears to be shifting with an apparent increase in child care centers within schools or nonprofit organizations amidst a decline in businesses operating one or more locations that solely or primarily provide child care.
- National research establishes a clear link between increased access to quality, affordable child care and increased LPR. Access to child care is also associated with improved productivity, increased state revenues, and greater economic security and earnings potential for women.
- Investments in Maryland's child care industry are essential to equitably growing Maryland's economy and keeping Maryland competitive, not to mention the educational and social benefits that children can receive from high quality care early in life.

Child care is a fragile market that requires government intervention to enable providers, often small businesses, to succeed and enable parents with young children to work. Child care challenges can create significant headwinds for equitable economic growth. A robust child care system with adequate capacity and affordability to meet demand for all parents interested in working outside of the home will enable more prime age adults to enter the labor force, thereby reducing job vacancies, allowing businesses to grow and create more jobs, and bolstering state revenue.

SB0857 expands the Prekindergarten Expansion Grants to add slots for additional children and not supplant childcare slots for infants and toddlers and requires the State Department of Education to establish a multiyear grant award process. It also requires the Department to convene a workgroup to explore and make recommendations on opportunities to incentivize growth in certain child care providers. The members of AAUW-Maryland believe this can do much to alleviate the issues of a lack of Pre-k child care slots in the state and allow more women to return to the workforce for the benefit of their families, their future earning potential and retirement savings, and the Maryland economy as a whole.

We thank you in advance for your favorable report on SB0857.

Thank you.

# **SB0857\_FAV\_Maryland Just Power Alliance.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Wenger

Position: FAV



### **Support Pre-K Expansion (SB0857)**

Dear Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

We are the [Maryland Just Power Alliance](#), a coalition of 3 non-partisan community power organizations: [Action in Montgomery](#) (AIM), [Anne Arundel Connecting Together](#) (ACT), and [People Acting Together in Howard](#) (PATH), representing tens of thousands of Maryland residents. We organize with people in congregations, schools, and neighborhoods to build power for policies that make our communities more fair and livable for everyone. We are asking you to support the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup Act (SB0857) when it is considered by the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

Expanding access to affordable Pre-K has emerged as one of the most important issues in our listening sessions with low- and middle-income families. Many of our children start kindergarten with disadvantages, and the gap widens over time. Pre-K is one of the most effective ways to reduce these educational inequities.

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup Act (SB0857) will remove barriers to pre-K expansion in community-based settings by updating the grant-making process. Creating a more accessible and robust pre-K grant system that adds more pre-K seats without removing infant and toddler seats will make a large difference for our children and families. Further, many Maryland childcare providers are small businesses. Making the grant more accessible will support small business development.

We strongly support SB0857 and are counting on you to pass a strong version of this bill out of your committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

# **COA\_written testimony\_SB857 Prekindergarten Expans**

Uploaded by: Laura Jahromi

Position: FAV





March 3, 2025

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 857 – Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup

**We respectfully urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to make a favorable report on SB 857– Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup - as we believe it will make the implementation of the mixed delivery Pre-K system, as envisioned in the Blueprint for Maryland's future, more equitable and ultimately more successful.**

As the largest county in Maryland, Montgomery County has a long way to go in order to meet goals for expanding the Pre-K system. A report commissioned by the county estimated that over 6,500 community-based Pre-K seats will be needed to serve 50% of the eligible Tier 1 three- and four-year-olds and all Tier 2 four-year-olds.<sup>i</sup> We currently have 354 seats.

This is a substantial increase from 208 seats in SY24 – due in large part to technical assistance and grant application support we provided through contracted partners to 8 new participating centers. We are now continuing to support these providers in managing the reporting requirements for the Pre-K grant, as it's a substantial burden for these small businesses. As we support these providers with their participation, it is woefully clear that many of the structures and policies of the grant itself inhibit the success of the program for community-based providers.

Additionally, Montgomery County recently completed a Child Care supply and demand study in order to understand how to better improve access to child care so that parents can participate in the labor force.<sup>ii</sup> Among other important findings, the study found that our county faces a substantial shortage of child care supply for children under the age of 2 with only enough licensed seats to serve 19% of children this age in our County. The report also found that though there are enough preschool seats to serve 83% of preschool aged children, many seats remain vacant because families cannot afford to access them. Families are in need of state supported Pre-K for their 3- and 4-year-old children. Community-based providers need state supported Pre-K to enroll these families and keep their businesses afloat. However, as we expand Pre-K, we need to learn from other jurisdictions who have gone before us, such as Washington D.C.<sup>iii</sup>, and ensure that Pre-K expansion does not further jeopardize child care access for families with infants and toddlers.

Senate Bill 857 will offer substantial improvements to make participation in Pre-K more equitable for community-based providers, by:

- Changing the timing of the Pre-K expansion grant process so that the notice of grant awards is distributed by March 1st in order to align with the enrollment process for providers and allow partnered outreach with local education agencies.
- Stabilize the funding so that small business child care providers can ensure these seats are available for families who need the care the most by moving the grant from a



reimbursement model to an upfront payment grant model and establishing a multi-year grant award process.

- Improving the application process and providing technical assistance.
- Convening a work group to explore opportunities to incentivize Pre-K expansion while stabilizing infant and toddler seats.

The model as it exists today for private community-based providers to apply to the Maryland State Department of Education to receive Pre-K grants does not currently work for the majority of private providers in our community. We need to make investments in infrastructure to support community-based providers participation in Pre-K if we truly want to have enough Pre-K seats to meet the needs of young children and their families in our community.

Submitted on behalf of the Children's Opportunity Alliance by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

Laura Jahromi, Manager, Strategic Initiatives  
The Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance  
1801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 | 301-450-1871 |  
[laura@mocochildren.org](mailto:laura@mocochildren.org)

The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](#) is a locally legislated Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity that connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/FY22%20Blueprint%20Report%20FINAL%20Report%20October%202022\(2\).pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/FY22%20Blueprint%20Report%20FINAL%20Report%20October%202022(2).pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/StateSupplyDemand\\_final\\_January2025.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/StateSupplyDemand_final_January2025.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/effects-universal-preschool-washington-d-c/>

## **SB857sponsorfinaltestimony2.pdf**

Uploaded by: Linda Hanifin Bonner

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**  
**Senate Bill 857**  
**CHILD CARE PREKINDERGARTEN EXPANSION AND EQUITY ACT OF 2025**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kegan, and Committee Members

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Helson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD. and I thank you for the opportunity to present this Bill.

SB 857 - The Child Care PreKindergarten Expansion and Equity ACT is a result of state constituents bringing to our attention a critical gap existing in the decision-making process for the enrollment of children in pre-K programs in Maryland.

Specifically, this bill intends to remove existing barriers currently preventing private childcare providers, particularly smaller and multilingual, from accessing MSDE's pre-K expansion grants and helping to achieve the goals of the program. It aligns the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Grant Process with that of Enrollment Planning. Currently, providers often receive funding decisions late in the enrollment cycle, limiting their ability to expand pre-K capacity.

This bill accomplishes five important actions.

1. It changes the timing of the Pre-K expansion grant process so that the notice of grant awards is distributed by March 1st and aligns it with the enrollment process for providers.
2. It adjusts the mechanism of the MSDE Pre-K expansion grant from a reimbursement model to 100% funding upfront. Most private childcare providers are small businesses and need upfront funding to prepare their programs.
3. It amends MSDE Pre-K expansion grant to be a multi-year award instead of a one-year award – providing greater financial stability for childcare providers, allowing them to plan and budget more effectively.
4. It emphasizes that Pre-K expansion should be used to expand access for families who cannot afford high quality early care and education and not come at the cost of decreasing access for the younger age groups.
5. It ensures full implementation of the hub model such that they are directed to provide technical assistance for multilingual, family childcare providers, and small centers to apply for

and administer the Pre-K Expansion grant and ensure the successful implementation of a hub model of supports for community-based Pre-K providers.

After hearing from our advocates today, I urge you to give favorable support to this bill.

Today's Advocates include:

Laura Jahromi, Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance.

Charo Torres, Latino Early Care and Education Coalition.

Pilar Olmedo and Tanushree Isaacman, AIM.

## **SB 857 Testimony L.Buchy.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Buchy

Position: FAV

# Wee Lad & Lassie Early Learning Center

---

March 3, 2025

## **SB 857 Child Care – Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup Testimony “In Favor”**

My name is Dr. Lisa Buchy. Since 1985 I have been an owner and director of early education and care programs in AACo. My company currently operates two locations serving over 100 children including children receiving Child Care Scholarship and providing public Pre-K to low-income families for 8 of the past 9 years.

My experience also includes faculty appointments at Johns Hopkins University where I worked on a large-scale childcare quality research grant and at Towson University in the Department of Early Childhood Education where I taught in the educator preparation program at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I serve on the advisory committee of the Maryland State Childcare Leadership Program (MECLP) and the Anne Arundel County Early Childhood Childcare Taskforce.

Early childhood education and care is a key priority for Maryland’s future. High quality care and early education impact school readiness, early literacy and lifelong health and well-being. **Children’s long-term outcomes are significantly impacted by what happens from birth to age 5 and the foundation for all that follows is laid down in the first 5 years of each person’s life.** Young children’s access to high-quality early childhood education and care, including high-quality Prekindergarten programs, is critical to their success in school and in life. The citizens of tomorrow are growing up in Maryland today.

According to the most recent Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) data from 23/24, in Anne Arundel County (AACo), where my programs are located, 5,765 Kindergarten students were enrolled for the 23/24 school year with families reporting only 50% of children engaged in prior early education and care. Thus, over 2,500 children may be in need of high-quality Pre-K experiences. These data also show that just 44% of AACo kindergarten students demonstrated school readiness. The COVID 19 pandemic impacted Maryland’s youngest learners and efforts to mitigate the learning loss continue to be needed. In AACo, children with disabilities are less ready than their peers with just 20% demonstrating school readiness in 23/24. Multilingual learners continue to lag behind their peers with 17% demonstrating school readiness. Household income also impacts children’s readiness for school with children who live in low-income

# Wee Lad & Lassie Early Learning Center

---

households consistently demonstrating decreased levels of school readiness. In AACo 27% of children from low-income households demonstrated school readiness in 23/24. My programs aim to address these needs by providing high quality Pre-K education to eligible children from low-income households, children with disabilities, and children who speak a language other than English at home through the mixed-delivery system and the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program.

However, participation in the Prekindergarten expansion grant is highly challenging and often impossible. While my programs have a track record of successfully winning and implementing the grant over many years, the current school year (24/25) was a dismal failure. After completing the complex grant application and receiving a grant award, we had to decline the grant last August when we enrolled only 1 eligible child. Had SB 857 already been passed, my program would have had resources including technical assistance and a workgroup to turn to for help instead of losing the grant. HB 857 feels like it was written for me and my programs. Each of the supports that are proposed are conducive to a successful mixed-delivery system and would enable my programs to participate with less struggle. We are ready, willing, and able but we need your help to remove the barriers to participation.

One of the biggest hurdles for community-based ECE providers participating in the Pre-K grant is financial. Early care and education programs are businesses that serve the public good. As such, they are subject to economic factors that influence cost and quality including the cost to provide care, competition, consumer behavior, and the business model of ECE. SB 857 addresses several of the negative financial outcomes for programs that participate in the grant. In the 8 years my programs participated in the Pre-K grant, we received a 15% advance on the funds in late September and regular monthly invoices were paid 60-90 days after submission on the first of each month following the provision of services to children. Thus, the costs of highly paid teachers, assistant teachers, supplies and materials were required to be “fronted” while waiting for grant funds. In my case, I had to borrow the funds to make this work each year. The implementation of advance payments of the full grant amount would mitigate the financially destabilizing effects on ECE programs of grant participation.

The passage SB 857 will achieve the following:



# Wee Lad & Lassie Early Learning Center

---

- Remove negative financial outcomes by stabilizing the Pre-K grant funding with a multi-year grant award, an advance payment model, timely grant application processing and NOGA distribution
- Support grantee success with readily available technical assistance
- Enable greater community-based ECE participation using plain language and languages other than English in the grant application
- Leverage the ECE field expertise by creating a workgroup to incentivize growth and participation

I thank Senator Henson for bringing this much-needed legislation forward and I urge you to support the passage of this bill.

# **SB0857 MALMB Testimony.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Kovacs

Position: FAV



**Local power, collective voice  
for Maryland's children, youth and families**

March 5, 2025

**SUPPORT – SB0857 – Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup**

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards, I am writing to express our support for the Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup SB0857. This initiative aims to simplify the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant process for private childcare providers. Local Management Boards in each county and jurisdiction across Maryland conduct community needs assessments to identify and address the needs of children and families in their respective areas. This bill seeks to alleviate private providers' barriers and aims to expand mixed-delivery childcare services.

In September 2024, the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards and the Anne Arundel Early Childhood Childcare Taskforce hosted the first annual statewide and third annual county summit to bring awareness to the needs of the childcare ecosystem. [Some of the feedback received](#) from this summit found that there were barriers for public providers to participate in the mixed delivery system. In Anne Arundel County, only two providers are receiving this grant, leaving a wide gap in achieving the goals of mixed delivery set by the Blueprint.

This bill will require the grant language to be simplified and in other languages for providers. It will also need specific dates for the application, allowing providers to better prepare for their businesses and assess the number of childcare slots they can facilitate. All funding for providers will be available on July 1, instead of the current reimbursement system that has left providers without payments for months. The technical assistance through a hub model will also support more providers applying for this grant. These items will allow more private providers to participate in the mixed delivery system.

**We urge you to support SB0857 – Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup** to support modifying the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Brown, PhD  
Chair

## **SB 857 PreK Expansion.pdf**

Uploaded by: RUBY DANIELS

Position: FAV



## **Testimony of Senate Bill 857**

Child Care – Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup

March 5, 2025

### **Position: Favorable**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

My name is Ruby Daniels, and I am honored to serve as the **President of the Maryland State Family Child Care Association**, representing thousands of family child care providers across the state. I have been a family child care provider for over 30 years and am currently in my second year as an **Independent Pre-K Expansion grantee**. Additionally, I serve as the **Chair of the Pillar 1 Advisory Committee to the AIB**, working to ensure equitable access to early childhood education in Maryland.

The **Prekindergarten Expansion Grant** is a vital opportunity for independent providers to offer high-quality early childhood education. However, the grant application process presents significant challenges, particularly for family child care providers and smaller programs. The application has an extremely short timeline for submission. This puts an undue burden on providers who must quickly gather extensive documentation while continuing to run their programs. Establishing a multiyear award process, as proposed in Senate Bill 857, would offer much-needed predictability and financial stability, allowing providers to focus on delivering quality education rather than reapplying for funding each year.

Another major barrier is **the grant invoicing process**. For independent family child care providers, navigating the complex reimbursement system can be overwhelming. Unlike larger institutions with dedicated administrative staff, family child care providers must balance teaching, compliance, and financial management on their own. Streamlining this process and ensuring 100% grant funding is provided by July 1, 2025, as outlined in this bill, will ease cash flow issues, and allow providers to operate effectively without delays in funding.

Senate Bill 857 also ensures that Pre-K Expansion Grants do not reduce the availability of child care slots for infants and toddlers. This is crucial, as Maryland is already facing **a shortage of infant and toddler care**. Protecting these slots while expanding prekindergarten services will help create a balanced and sustainable early education system.

Furthermore, the bill's provision for **technical assistance** especially for family child care providers and multilingual applicants like myself is a critical step forward. Many dedicated providers have the skills and passion to participate in the Pre-K Expansion but struggle with navigating the grant system. By offering clearer guidance, multilingual resources, and direct technical support, we can increase participation from diverse providers, ensuring all families have access to high-quality prekindergarten options.



**Maryland State  
Family Child Care  
Association**  
www.msfccca.org

For these reasons, I strongly support Senate Bill 857 and urge the committee to approve this legislation. The proposed changes will make the Pre-K Expansion Grant more accessible, sustainable, and effective, allowing Maryland to continue building a strong foundation for our youngest learners.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ruby Daniels  
President, MSFCCA  
[Rubygd33@gmail.com](mailto:Rubygd33@gmail.com)  
443-538-7829

# **SB 857 MDAEYC FAV.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Stephanie Schaefer

Position: FAV



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

**Testimony in Support of SB 857**  
**“Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup”**  
**Submitted to the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**  
**March 5, 2025**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) supports SB 857, which would make several helpful modifications to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant.

MDAEYC is a professional association of 1,700 early childhood educators, allied professionals, and families. We promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood education practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

We support the following modifications to the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant that are proposed in SB 857:

1. The Prekindergarten Expansion Grants cannot be used to supplant child care slots for infants and toddlers
2. The Grants may be used to add slots for additional children
3. The Grant applications are required to use plain language and be available in multiple languages
4. The dates of the Grant application and awarding of the Grant funds are modified to better align with the admissions cycle used by most child care programs, and
5. A multi-year Grant award process is included to provide funding predictability and stability for participating programs.

MDAEYC supports these proposed Prekindergarten Expansion Grant program modifications and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 857.

*If you have any questions, please contact: Stephanie Schaefer, PhD. Program Coordinator, at [stephanie.schaefer@mdaeyc.org](mailto:stephanie.schaefer@mdaeyc.org) or 240-441-3280.*



## **SB0857- State Board- LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carey Wright

Position: INFO

---

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

**BILL:** SB 857 - Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup

**DATE:** March 5, 2025

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

---

**Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:**

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding Senate Bill (SB) 857 Child Care - Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Modifications and Workgroup. This legislation proposes to alter the use of Prekindergarten Expansion Grants to add slots for additional children and not supplant child care slots for infants and toddlers, requiring applications for the grant to use certain terminology and be accompanied by certain instructions, requiring MSDE to establish a multiyear grant award process, and requiring the Department to convene a workgroup to explore and make recommendations on opportunities to incentivize growth in certain child care providers with slots for infants and toddlers.

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant is a competitive grant program administered by MSDE. The grant provides funding for local education agencies (LEAs) and private providers to administer high-quality prekindergarten and school readiness services throughout the State for children and their families in alignment with The Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The overall purpose of the grant is to broaden availability and expand access to high-quality prekindergarten educational programming and school readiness services for three- year-old and four-year-old students from families with household incomes up to 300% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL). A high-quality prekindergarten program consists of an early learning program that includes structural elements that are evidence based and nationally recognized.

Although MSDE anticipates SB 857 will allow for more programs to access the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, thereby allowing more children and families to participate, the agency has some concerns. For instance, SB 857 would require MSDE to change the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant's application submission date, resulting in the need for the grant to be released earlier to notify applicants of their status (awarded or denied), so that the agency could meet the timeframes as stipulated in the bill. While MSDE finds no significant issue with releasing the application earlier, it should be made clear that the agency cannot issue an actual Notice of Grant Award (NOGA), along with issuing multiyear grants, until the awarded applicant's information can be entered into the NOGA system for processing, which opens for grant year processing on July 1st of each year.

MSDE emphasizes the NOGA mandate (required information first) because MSDE anticipates a challenge in providing 100% of the grant amount to the recipient on or before July 1st, along with issuing multiyear grants, due to the unforeseen number of errors, corrections, issues regarding unallowable expenditures, issues with supporting documentation, and technical assistance (TA)

required from MSDE staff as it pertains to the current prekindergarten grant program. The unforeseen number of invoicing errors is based on the current and previous grant years. Regular oversight and support are needed to ensure grantees are being fiscally responsible with state funds, and this allows for course correction and technical assistance as needed in real time.

Providing 100% of the grant funds at the beginning of the year may not allow for regular oversight of fiscal operations and the opportunity for MSDE to identify concerns, support grantees, and provide timely technical assistance. The current program structure requires the grant to be reimbursable, which allows MSDE staff to review fiscal activity often and provide technical assistance as needed to address any concerns. Grantees can then request a 15% advance of grant funds to provide start-up costs when implementing the grant.

Lastly, grant awards are granted based on the number of slots for anticipated enrollment. MSDE currently monitors enrollment and provides technical assistance to programs that are under-enrolled. MSDE anticipates challenges when monitoring funding over multiple years based on enrollment that may fluctuate. It would also present challenges in determining a reconciliation process to ensure that grant funds are distributed to programs providing direct services to enrolled children.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **SB 857**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504, if you would like any additional information.