



ARCO IRIS

BILINGUAL CHILDREN'S CENTER

January 27, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

Support: HB 0325

I have 15 years of experience as a childcare Director/Operator, as a fierce advocate for those working in early childhood education, and for the families who are receiving its benefits. I am here today to say that I fully support HB 0325, *Adult Education–High School Diploma by Examination–Requirements and Study*.

Now more than ever, workforce shortages are impacting the field of early childhood education. This bill would provide an important opportunity for potential childcare staff to earn a High School Equivalency by examination in their native language.

Maryland has a substantial immigrant community of which many were unable to complete high school due to war or lack of opportunity in their home countries. Nevertheless, they are eager to continue their education. Allowing them to take the equivalency exam in their native language would significantly improve their chances of success. For several years I have advocated on their behalf so that they can learn and grow both professionally and personally. This growth in learning is doubly powerful: one learns the profession but also learns and grows from self-worth. Not only will we be building a workforce of educators, but also educators who will become mentors to others interested in the field. Gaining this equivalency will be an important rung in career development and advancement for many people, such as completing the 90s hours of Child Development and Methods and Materials which is required for all those desiring to be a preschool teacher. Opportunities are waiting to be created by passing HB 0325: I am excited at the prospect of many more teachers waiting in the wings, readying themselves to be childhood educators.

I urge you to vote in favor of this bill to help address the childcare staffing crisis.

Sincerely,

Carolina Reyes

Owner/Director

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