

---

**TO:** Ways and Means Committee

**BILL:** HB 359 - Prince George's County - Early Childhood Education Program, High School Child Care Centers, and Fee in Child Support Cases - Established PG 502-25

**DATE:** February 12, 2025

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

---

**Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding House Bill (HB) 359 - Prince George's County - Early Childhood Education Program, High School Child Care Centers, and Fee in Child Support Cases - Established PG 502-25, which requires MSDE to assist Prince George's County Board of Education in establishing a child care center in each public high school to offer a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program in Early Childhood, which would prepare students for additional education and careers in early childhood education and care. Moreover, the bill also includes a stipulation for the child care centers to be established specifically in high schools where the pregnancy rate amongst students is greater than 1%.

For a child care center to be licensed in Maryland, an applicant must go through several steps. First, the applicant must submit a "Notice of Intent to Operate a New Child Care Facility" to their local MSDE Regional Licensing Office. Next, the applicant is responsible for obtaining various permits and authorizations from state and local governmental agencies, such as Zoning, Use and Occupancy, and Fire. Existing high schools currently without a child care facility on their grounds would need to identify space within their existing complex to be renovated into a child care center or identify space on the site for an addition. The location would then need to allow for an adjacent outdoor fenced-in play area. Be advised high schools that are already maximizing their existing building area and are on tight sites might have more difficulty achieving this.

Once all approvals and authorizations are received by the Regional Licensing Office, the application process begins. The assigned licensing specialist works closely with the applicant to answer all questions the applicant may have, provide continuous technical assistance (TA) to the applicant, and ensure that all required documents are received. These documents include but are not limited to the following: staffing patterns, staff qualifications, personnel lists, the release of information forms, criminal background checks and clearances, medical forms, menus, the center's plan of operation, and workers' compensation insurance coverage.

After all documents are received and verified, the assigned specialist then conducts onsite inspections at the facility intended for care to ensure the program has sufficient materials and equipment to promote the growth and development of children in child care and that the facility is set up to meet applicable health and safety requirements for the ages of children intended. It is essential to note that Perkins funding does not cover the operational costs of child care centers. As a result, several Local

Educational Agencies (LEAs) with child care apprentices have expressed concerns about the costs associated with purchasing supplies and materials that cannot be funded through grants. Nevertheless, onsite inspections entail the licensing specialist making a single visit or multiple visits to the proposed site depending on the number and severity of the concerns observed during the site visits that require correction before a license is issued. This process can take several months or even years depending on the pending approvals received from state and local governmental agencies and how quickly the applicant can make the necessary corrections, which can be costly overall. After licensure, the assigned licensing specialist then monitors the center for compliance and provides TA upon request.

MSDE believes this bill may have a significant fiscal and operational impact, particularly if up to 30 high schools require the establishment of a child care program that offers a CTE program. This will mean the thirteen (13) licensing specialists currently assigned to the Prince George's County Regional Licensing Office will be required to review and process more applications. In addition, the approvals to operate the programs will become a high priority based on the need for the programs to be opened by the 2026-2027 school year. As a result, the approval process will have to be expedited, and the assigned applications will then have to be prioritized over the responsibilities of the licensing specialist's current caseload, which consists of conducting inspections, providing TA, investigating complaints, serving emergency suspension actions as needed, and testifying at administrative hearings. Therefore, it is likely that in order to meet the timeframes stipulated for the establishment of the child care programs, MSDE will presumably need an additional 1.5 staff members, as well as approval for overtime compensation, to keep up with the demand from the impending law.

Additionally, here are some key points of consideration in terms of CTE program requirements. Prince George's County currently has Early Childhood CTE programs of study in 10 of its 30 high schools, and expanding the program to every school could raise concerns about the viability and sustainability of these programs. Secondly, there may not be sufficient student interest or enrollment to sustain both the programs and the child care centers in every high school. Furthermore, the availability of qualified instructors to teach the specialized content of Early Childhood Education might not meet the demand, leading to potential gaps in program quality and delivery. Lastly, the focus on establishing child care centers might divert attention and resources from other necessary educational programming needs within the county, including the improvement and expansion of existing CTE programs that are also aligned with workforce demands and student career interests.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 359**. 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.