
TO: Ways and Means Committee

BILL: HB 1303 - Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications - Alterations

DATE: March 5, 2025

POSITION: Letter of Support with Amendments

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the State Board of Education support House Bill (HB) 1303 - Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications – Alterations with amendments. The legislation proposes to require MSDE to set minimal experiential standards as qualifications for child care teachers that require a child care teacher to hold a high school diploma or equivalent, have successfully completed certain courses for credit, and have successfully been employed for two years in a certain position for a registered family child care home or licensed child care center. The proposed bill also proposes to alter the probationary employment qualifications for a child care teacher employed in a child care center.

MSDE’s Licensing Branch recognizes the fact that child care programs often struggle with trying to attain qualified child care staff while trying to maintain the staff they currently have. This is often a concern for not just the agency and the child care program itself, but also for the families of the children enrolled at the program. Additionally, when a child care program goes through the process of interviewing a candidate and streamlining who is best suited for employment, obtaining all required documentation and clearances becomes another pertinent yet sometimes burdensome process. When layering those requirements and components onto a person that migrated to the United States from a foreign country, this becomes a compounded obstacle, often resulting in an unintentional deterrent. The agency acknowledges this as a concern because MSDE values the importance of diversity in child care programs which is important to meeting the needs of the whole child covering many backgrounds, including home language, culture, religion, and abilities.

HB 1303 proposes assisting individuals from foreign countries that are faced with certain obstacles in seeking employment within early child care by setting the minimal experiential standards stipulated in the bill and providing alternative pathways to becoming a qualified teacher. Moreover, the bill will allow a staff member from a foreign country to have up to two years to earn a certificate of high school equivalency if they meet the probationary employment qualifications. Allowing the individual to have extra time is beneficial because oftentimes the individual may not have access to their international credentials, or they may not have completed the level of education required. In addition, at times international credentials may require additional time for translation and evaluation.

MSDE supports HB 1303 because it creates alternative pathways for individuals from a foreign country that wish to work in child care. However, while the agency supports the proposed bill, MSDE requests that the bill be amended to remove the requirement for the courses to be approved by the State Board (page 2, lines 15-16). Currently, MSDE has a committee that meets regularly to strategically determine

which colleges/universities are accredited and to determine which coursework is approved for credit. In addition to the committee of members working on approvals, they also make required modifications (resulting in discontinuation, expiration, or revocation) to the current list of approved institutions and coursework. Every committee member has specialized clearance to enter all approved course work and accredited institutions into the Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS) at any time and in real time, so licensing staff can access the information daily when qualifying staff. All approved coursework is listed in CCATS for Licensing to access in determining staff qualifications. Although we appreciate the State Board members engagement in this process, including additional individuals in this process may increase the time for approval process to conclude, further extending the time it would take to get the individual into the classroom, child care center or family child care home. The agency could include this process in the work of the committee that is currently in place.

The agency must note that should the proposed bill become law, Licensing will need to make amendments to their Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) to include the changes regarding child care teacher and probationary teacher qualifications as stipulated in the bill. Licensing would then need to update some resources, policies, and procedures to include the changes. Lastly, CCATS will require modifications to assist (provide notifications) with the tracking of staff that have two years to obtain a high school equivalency certificate and staff that are approved as probationary teachers for the time limits described in the proposed bill.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 1303**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov, if you would like any additional information.

