
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: HB 561 - Maryland Child Care Credential Program - Extension of Funding

DATE: February 24, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the State Department of Education (MSDE) extends its support for House Bill (HB) 561 - Maryland Child Care Credential Program - Extension of Funding. This legislation requires the Governor to appropriate each year to the Maryland Child Care Credential Program, an amount that is equal to the amount (\$4,000,000) appropriated in fiscal year (FY) 2024, beginning in FY 2028.

The Maryland Child Care Credential Program is a long-standing, voluntary program designed to strengthen and support Maryland's early childhood workforce. After serving more than 10,000 participants in FY 2024, the program experienced a one-year funding interruption in FY 2025 due to budget constraints and was not in operation. With the annual appropriation of funds proposed in HB 561 to support the Maryland Child Care Credential Program, this funding will enable:

- Financial incentives, including achievement bonuses and training reimbursements.
- Professional development support through approved training and education.
- Career advancement pathways via the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF), enabling degree attainment.
- Integration with Maryland's Career Lattice, recognizing all positions in the child care workforce and supporting upward mobility.
- A commitment to quality by requiring ongoing training and education, improving early learning environments for Maryland's children.

Statutory funding for the program will end at the conclusion of FY 2026. While HB 561 provides funding for FY 2028, it does not include an appropriation for FY 2027. Absent additional funding, this gap would result in a second interruption of the Maryland Child Care Credential Program within a four-year period.

The program is designed to provide consistent support to the child care workforce at a time when programs are facing significant challenges with staff retention and recruitment of qualified, high-quality personnel. During the previous disruption, the child care community and interest holders regularly communicated the substantial impact of the break in service, underscoring the program's value. A second interruption would not only negatively affect the community we serve but also undermine the considerable amount of time and resources MSDE invested to restart the program, resulting in inefficiencies and potential waste of funds, which our state budget cannot afford.

MSDE recognizes the State's current fiscal climate and the need to balance competing budget priorities. While we strongly support the Child Care Credential Program, we acknowledge that implementation must be considered within available State resources.

In summary, the Maryland Child Care Credential Program is essential for workforce retention, quality improvement, and access to higher education. This legislation would secure mandated funding for the Credential Program, ensuring stability and continued support for professional growth and quality in early childhood education, child outcomes and school readiness.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 561**. Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at Laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov if you would like any additional information.