



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 561

DATE: February 24, 2026

SPONSOR: Delegate Palakovich Carr

ASSIGNED TO: Appropriations and Ways & Means

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POSITION: FAVORABLE (Department of Health and Human Services)

Maryland Child Care Credential Program - Extension of Funding

House Bill 561 requires the Governor to include at least \$5.3M in the State budget beginning in Fiscal Year 2028 and each year thereafter to fund the Maryland Child Care Credential Program (the Program). The Program permits the Maryland Office of Child Care to award an individual an achievement bonus, a training reimbursement, or a training voucher if the individual pursues, obtains, or already holds an Office-approved child care credential.

According to the 2025 Montgomery County Early Care and Education Workforce and Compensation Study, one in five early educators earn below the federal poverty level for a family of four with two income earners, and more than four in five earn below the County's self-sufficiency standard. Additionally, nine out of ten early educators earn less than the entry-level salary of a Montgomery County Public Schools teacher.

In alignment with the Year One implementation priorities outlined in the study's recommendations, the dedicated funding for educator bonuses and training reimbursements directly provided for by House Bill 561 advances the shared objectives between Montgomery County and the State to increase scholarship and professional development funding. By leveraging partnerships with higher education institutions and state resources, we can better support early educators in attaining degrees, credentials, and meaningful opportunities for career advancement within the field.

Sustaining and expanding the early care and education workforce is not only an investment in our youngest learners, but a critical investment in the State's economic vitality. When early educators are adequately compensated and supported, families benefit from stable, high-quality care, parents are able to fully participate in the workforce, and communities thrive. Strategic, sustained funding ensures a stronger, more equitable early learning system—one that supports educators, families, and the long-term prosperity of the State as a whole.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully requests a favorable committee report.