



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

**Testimony in Support of HB 561**  
**"Child Care Credential Program - Continuation"**  
**Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee**  
**February 20, 2026**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) supports HB 561, which would restore funding to the Maryland Child Care Credential Program.

MDAEYC is a professional association of 1,700 early childhood educators, allied professionals, and families. We promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood education practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

We support HB 561 because Maryland's early childhood workforce is in crisis, and the suspension of the Child Care Credential Program has exacerbated this crisis. The program was suspended on June 30, 2024, due to lack of funding in the state budget, affecting over 20,000 early childhood educators who relied on it for professional development support, training reimbursements, and credential bonuses that helped supplement their low wages.

Maryland faces an ongoing child care crisis and workforce shortage. Early childhood educators earn an average of \$34,000 per year—among the lowest wages in our economy—while performing work that is foundational to children's development and families' economic stability.<sup>1</sup> The Child Care Credential Program was one of the few mechanisms through which Maryland recognized these professionals' expertise and supported their continued education.

When we fail to support our early childhood workforce, we cannot maintain the stable, high-quality care that Maryland's children and working families need. The Credential Program is a proven investment that helps retain qualified educators, encourages professional growth, and ultimately improves outcomes for children.

Child care is essential infrastructure for Maryland's economy. When child care educators lack support and leave the field, child care programs close or reduce capacity, and working families are forced to reduce work hours, turn down opportunities, or leave the workforce entirely. The Child Care Credential Program is not simply a workforce support; it is an investment in Maryland's economic vitality and the well-being of children and families across the state.

For these reasons, MDAEYC supports HB 561 and respectfully requests a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> First Five Years Fund. (2026, January 26). *Child Care and Early Learning in Maryland*. <https://www.ffyf.org/states/maryland/>