



Testimony - HB 748,
Publicly Funded Prekindergarten - Early Childhood Educator Career Ladder for Private
Providers - New Pathways
Favorable
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 25, 2026
Elly Cowan on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of education professionals across Maryland, including early childhood educators who are on the front lines of preparing our youngest learners for success. We strongly support the intent of Maryland’s early childhood educator career ladder — to transform early childhood education into a high-status profession, attract talented educators, and retain high-quality teachers through meaningful compensation and advancement opportunities.

House Bill 748 takes an important and pragmatic step toward making that vision sustainable.

This legislation strengthens Maryland’s early childhood educator career ladder by creating more realistic and accessible pathways for educators working in private prekindergarten settings. By replacing rigid, one-size-fits-all deadlines with flexible timelines tied to when an educator is hired or promoted, HB 748 recognizes the real-life circumstances of working adults—many of whom are balancing jobs, family responsibilities, and continuing education.

Importantly, the bill allows educators to gain necessary credentials—such as a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an associate degree—within a reasonable period after entering the profession, rather than requiring them upfront or by arbitrary deadlines.

This approach removes unnecessary barriers to entry while still maintaining high standards for quality and professional growth.

HB 748 also appropriately values experience. By preserving pathways for long-time early childhood educators to advance based on years of service, the bill ensures that dedicated workers are not pushed out of the profession due to shifting credential requirements. At the same time, it pairs these pathways with expectations for continued professional development and mentoring, strengthening the overall quality of instruction.

For SEIU members, this bill is about more than policy—it is about workforce stability. Maryland is investing heavily in expanding access to prekindergarten, but that expansion cannot succeed without a strong, supported workforce. If requirements are too rigid or unrealistic, providers will struggle to hire and retain staff, and families will ultimately bear the consequences through reduced access or program instability.

HB 748 strikes the right balance between maintaining high standards and creating achievable pathways for educators to enter and advance in the field. It supports recruitment, improves retention, and respects the professionalism of early childhood educators.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 urges a favorable report on House Bill 748.

Thank you for your time and consideration.