



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over five thousand members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony in Support of HB 659 State Board of Education – Membership – Early Childhood Development Professional Ways and Means Committee February 18, 2025

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland State Child Care Association, I am here in enthusiastic support of HB 659. Board composition is at the heart of board effectiveness. Strong, forward-thinking boards ensure their membership reflects the priorities, challenges, and stakeholders of the systems they govern. HB 659 seeks to create equity in the composition of the State Board of Education by adding an Early Childhood Development Professional — ensuring that expertise in birth-to-five education and care is represented at the highest level of education policy in Maryland.

The importance of early childhood education is already recognized in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, particularly under Pillar 1. Blueprint's mixed-delivery Pre-K goals cannot be achieved without meaningful participation from child care programs across the state. Early learning begins at birth, and high-quality early childhood education lays the foundation for long-term academic and life success. Yet currently, the State Board of Education does not include a member with expertise in early childhood development and care.

This is significant.

The State Board adopts regulations and policies governing more than 6,600 licensed early childhood programs serving over 206,000 young children across Maryland's 24 jurisdictions. The Division of Early Childhood budget exceeds \$600 million annually. Despite this scale and impact, there is no dedicated early childhood professional voice on the Board.

The Board includes student, parent, and teacher representation — all proximity experts. HB 659 simply asks that early childhood development professionals receive the same consideration. Adding this expertise would:

- Strengthens collaboration to build a comprehensive birth-to-five system
- Support implementation of the Blueprint's mixed-delivery model
- Provide real-time insight into operational, regulatory, and workforce challenges
- Ensure policy decisions consider business and financial impacts on providers

- Improve understanding of how regulations affect infants, toddlers, and Pre-K capacity

The recent *State of the Economy* report from the Comptroller of Maryland highlights troubling trends: declining child care capacity, concerns about infant and toddler care availability, and insufficient data to fully understand the system's labor force impact.

The report clearly states that child care is a fragile market requiring thoughtful government intervention. A robust child care system supports workforce participation, business growth, and state revenue. HB 659 aligns with that recommendation. It strengthens governance by ensuring early childhood expertise is present when policies are debated and adopted.

Importantly, HB 659 respects the current structure of the State Board. Appointments remain under the Governor's authority and are supported through recommendations from the existing Office of Child Care Advisory Council.

This bill does not create bureaucracy. It strengthens representation.

Early childhood education and care support children, families, and Maryland's economy. If we are serious about building a comprehensive birth-to-five system and meeting the goals of the Blueprint, we must ensure the governing board reflects that priority.

HB 659 is a practical, equitable, thoughtful step forward.

MSCCA respectfully requests a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration