
TO: Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 539 - Child Care Centers - Teacher Qualifications - Alterations

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are providing information regarding HB 539, which requires the State Board to provide a pathway for individuals who lack proof of necessary educational attainment to attest to having obtained their qualifying educational credentials to be a child care teacher in a child care center. The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) is required to establish a process to carry out the requirements of the bill.

Currently, licensing regulations under the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) require all child care staff to submit documentation verifying their educational attainment before qualifying as a child care teacher. Individuals who need additional time to obtain, translate, or evaluate their credentials may begin working as a Teacher's Aide, which does not require any additional educational attainment, while completing this process, provided they have successfully passed background checks and submitted other required documents, such as a medical evaluation.

While HB 539 aims to create a pathway for qualified individuals who may lack documentation, MSDE is concerned that allowing attestations for some individuals could affect the consistency of standards for child care teachers. Broad application of a self-attestation pathway could weaken existing requirements that ensure child care teachers meet standards similar to those required in Local Education Agencies (LEAs), which are critical for supporting students' school readiness.

MSDE also notes that maintaining consistent teacher qualifications is important for supporting the health and safety of children and the stability of child care providers. Ensuring staff are prepared and trained helps promote continuity of care and a strong, professional workforce, which benefits both children and families. If staffing challenges arise, families are more likely to withdraw their children, which can disrupt care and affect program stability.

An alternative option for individuals who face challenges in presenting proof of educational attainment is to pursue becoming a family child care provider. Family child care providers are not required to submit specific educational credentials, such as a high school diploma or equivalent. Family child care providers operate independently within their own home as entrepreneurs, and contribute to meeting child care demand in their community. This option, in addition to the Teacher's Aide pathway noted above, provides an alternative for those who are interested in working in child care, but may lack proof of necessary educational attainment.

While MSDE understands and appreciates the intent of HB 539 to expand access to the child care profession, the Department seeks to do so in ways that continue to support consistent standards and uphold the quality and professionalism of the workforce.

The Department requests that the Committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 539**. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs at Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.