



**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 539- Child Care Centers-Teacher Qualifications-Alterations Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee Feb. 18, 2026

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

The Maryland State Child Care Association strongly supports HB 539.

HB 539 creates an alternative, probationary pathway for individuals seeking to become Child Care Teachers in center-based programs. This bill strengthens Maryland's workforce pipeline without lowering quality or safety standards.

Under current regulations, Child Care Teachers must submit documentation of a high school diploma or GED, complete 90 hours of approved coursework, pass health and background clearances, and complete required safety training before they can serve in this role. Additionally, a high school diploma is required to pursue a Child Development Associate credential or advance along Maryland's career ladder.

While these standards are important, the rigid documentation requirement creates an unintended barrier—particularly for refugees and immigrants who fled their home countries without access to their educational records. Many of these individuals are experienced, educated, capable, and ready to work. Yet without documentation, they are blocked from employment and career advancement.

HB 539 allows these individuals to work under a probationary pathway while completing regulatory requirements. This mirrors competency-based models and registered apprenticeships used successfully in other workforce sectors.

Importantly, Maryland already has regulatory inconsistency. Under COMAR, licensed family child care providers—who may care for up to eight children of varying ages—are not required to provide a high school diploma or GED. HB 539 promotes equity across provider types while maintaining standards. The workforce crisis and the need for equity makes action urgent.

According to the Comptroller of Maryland, the number of child care providers in Maryland declined by 15% between 2020 and 2024. The Comptroller's State of the Economy report also found Maryland lost \$2.14 billion due to employee absences and turnover related to child care challenges.

Research from Maryland Family Network and national studies confirm that access to affordable, reliable child care directly impacts labor force participation and economic stability.

Child care is not a luxury service. It is economic infrastructure. Parents cannot work, attend school, or participate in job training without it. Child care cannot be automated or delivered curbside. It depends entirely on the qualified workforce.

HB 539 is an equitable, practical, thoughtful solution to help rebuild that workforce, especially for those refugees fleeing home country without documents. It creates opportunity, supports equity, and protects quality. Maryland cannot afford to continue workforce decline.

MSCCA respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 539.