



HB0539 Child Care Centers – Teacher Qualifications – Alterations

Position: Favorable

February 18, 2026

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, **offers favorable testimony in support of HB539 Child Care Centers – Teacher Qualifications – Alterations**, which establishes an attestation pathway for child care teachers who possess the qualifications to serve Maryland's children but lack formal documentation of their educational credentials. This bill is fundamentally about equity, and it recognizes the invaluable contributions of a workforce that has been undervalued for far too long.

Child care is overwhelmingly performed by women—particularly women of color and immigrant women—who have been caring for and educating our youngest children for decades, often before formal credentialing standards existed. Many of these educators began their careers when documentation requirements were minimal or nonexistent. They developed their expertise through years of hands-on practice, professional development workshops, and deep commitment to early childhood development.

Today, these same dedicated professionals find themselves caught in a bureaucratic bind: they are qualified by experience, knowledge, and demonstrated competence, but they cannot produce transcripts from institutions that may have closed, records that were lost to time or circumstance, or credentials earned in other countries that are difficult or impossible to verify through traditional channels.

Maryland faces a critical child care shortage. According to recent data, we have child care deserts across the state where families struggle to find quality, affordable care. Losing experienced educators who are already serving in our child care centers would be devastating—not just for the programs that rely on them, but for the thousands of children and families who depend on stable, nurturing care.

Child care workers are among the lowest-paid professionals in Maryland, with median wages that often fall below a living wage. Despite their essential work—providing the foundation for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development—they receive little recognition and inadequate compensation. Many work multiple jobs to make ends meet while pouring their hearts into caring for other people's children. To now tell these educators that their years of service don't matter because they cannot produce a piece of paper is both unjust and impractical. It would force qualified teachers out of classrooms, destabilize programs, and harm the very children we are trying to serve.

HB0539 does not lower standards—it recognizes that documentation is not the same as qualification. This bill acknowledges that structural barriers—including systemic racism, economic inequality, and immigration challenges—have prevented many qualified individuals from maintaining formal records of their educational attainment. An attestation pathway allows these professionals to affirm their credentials under penalty of perjury, providing a legal and ethical mechanism to verify qualifications when traditional documentation is unavailable. This approach has been successfully used in other professional licensing contexts and balances accountability with accessibility.

Moreover, this bill reflects our commitment to culturally responsive practice. It recognizes that credentials earned internationally or through non-traditional pathways are valid, and it refuses to perpetuate a system that privileges certain forms of educational documentation over lived expertise and demonstrated competence.

Advocating for this bill is about respecting the predominantly female, predominantly Black and Brown workforce that sustains our child care infrastructure. These women have shown up every day—through the pandemic, through financial hardship, through lack of recognition—because they believe in the power of early childhood education. They deserve our support. They deserve to have their qualifications recognized. And they deserve policies that reflect the reality of their lives and careers, rather than rigid bureaucratic requirements that ignore their contributions.

HB0539 is common-sense legislation that protects Maryland's children, stabilizes our child care system, and honors the educators who have built this field. It ensures that we do not lose experienced, qualified teachers to paperwork barriers while maintaining the integrity of professional standards through a legally binding attestation process.

MAREE urges you to support HB0539 and to stand with Maryland's child care workforce.

peace & truth,
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