



**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 5500 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.

HB 1373-State Department of Education – Independent Regulatory Framework for After School and Out of School Time Child Care Programs

**Submitted to: Ways and Means Committee
Position: FAVORABLE**

MSCCA supports **House Bill 1373**, which requires the **Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)** to study and make recommendations on establishing an **independent regulatory and licensing framework for after school and out of school time child care programs serving children age five and older**.

This legislation represents a thoughtful, next step toward aligning state regulation with the **real-world operations and needs of school-age child care providers, children, and families** across Maryland.

HB 1373 recognizes that **after school and out of school time programs are fundamentally different from full-day early childhood child care centers** and should not be regulated under the same framework designed for children under age five.

Currently, providers serving school-age children are required to comply with regulations developed for full-day, early childhood settings. These requirements often create **unnecessary regulatory barriers** that do not reflect the limited hours, program structure, or developmental needs of older children.

HB 1373 appropriately directs MSDE to **investigate these regulatory barriers** and assess how they impact providers' ability to offer safe, accessible, and developmentally appropriate programming.

Recognizing the Unique Needs of School-Age Children and Programs

The bill requires MSDE to evaluate the **unique characteristics of after school and out of school time programs**, including:

- The use of **shared or multi-purpose spaces** such as schools, recreation centers, and faith-based facilities for limited hours;
- The developmental needs of school-age children, including **physical activity, homework time, social-emotional development, and transportation to off-site locations**;
- The **distinct experience and qualifications required of staff** working with older children;
- The differing needs of parents of school-age children and the ways programs can best support working families, **however keeping in mind that public Pre-K is expanding and with Pre-K age children in before and after school programs, this changes the staff ratio requirements significantly.**

By centering these considerations, HB 1373 ensures that any future regulatory framework is **developmentally appropriate, practical, and responsive** to the realities of school-age child care.

The need for this study is underscored by **ongoing concerns about entities providing child care without appropriate licensure**, including karate schools and similar programs that function as child care providers while operating outside the current regulatory framework.

A clearer, more appropriate regulatory structure for school-age programs will help **close existing gaps in oversight**, strengthen child safety, and ensure consistent standards across all providers serving children during out-of-school hours.

School-age child care regulations have been considered through legislation in the past; however, **few meaningful changes were ultimately made**, despite stakeholders offering numerous recommendations to improve the regulatory process.

HB 1373 directly addresses this shortcoming by requiring MSDE to **consult with stakeholders** throughout the study process and to develop **specific, actionable recommendations** across key regulatory areas.

The bill requires MSDE's recommendations to address critical areas, including:

- Staffing and staff-to-child ratios
- Facility and spacing requirements, whenever possible
- Background checks (according to state and federal law) and training
- Emergency planning
- Inspections
- Parental notice and approval
- Health and safety standards

Additionally, HB 1373 requires MSDE to examine **administrative structures**, licensing versus registration models, tiered systems, staffing needs within the Department, and the timeline for transitioning to a new framework—ensuring that any future changes are **deliberate, feasible, and well-managed**.

House Bill 1373 does not mandate immediate regulatory changes. Instead, it takes a **measured, responsible approach** by requiring a comprehensive study, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based recommendations to be reported to the General Assembly by **December 1, 2026**.

By advancing HB 1373, the General Assembly affirms its commitment to **child safety, program quality, regulatory clarity, and equitable access to school-age child care** across Maryland.

MSCCA respectfully urges a **FAVORABLE** report on **House Bill 1373**.