



Testimony - HB 748,
Publicly Funded Prekindergarten - Early Childhood Educator Career Ladder for Private
Providers - Repeal of Deadlines
Favorable
House Ways & Means Committee
February 25, 2026
Elly Cowan on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Wilkins & Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of education professionals across Maryland, including early childhood educators who are on the front lines of preparing our youngest learners for success. We strongly support the intent of Maryland's early childhood educator career ladder — to transform early childhood education into a high-status profession, attract talented educators, and retain high-quality teachers through meaningful compensation and advancement opportunities.

House Bill 748 takes an important and pragmatic step toward making that vision sustainable.

By repealing rigid statutory deadlines and replacing them with timelines that begin when an educator is hired or qualifies at a given level, this bill creates a more realistic and equitable pathway for early childhood educators working in private prekindergarten settings. Rather than penalizing educators based on arbitrary statewide dates, HB 748 ensures that professional advancement requirements are aligned with an individual educator's career trajectory.

This flexibility is especially important for private providers who are working to meet the rapidly growing demand for publicly funded prekindergarten. Maryland's commitment to expanding access depends on recruiting and retaining qualified educators. Impractical deadlines risk pushing experienced professionals out of the field at the very moment when we need them most.

HB 748 preserves the integrity of the career ladder — including degree attainment, professional development requirements, mentoring expectations, and quality standards such as CLASS benchmarks — while making compliance achievable. It supports workforce stability without lowering standards.

For working families, that stability matters. Children thrive in classrooms led by experienced educators who are supported, not rushed out of the profession by inflexible timelines. Providers thrive when they can plan staffing and professional development responsibly. And the State's investment in early childhood education yields stronger returns when the workforce is retained and developed over time.

SEIU Local 500 believes that strengthening the early childhood workforce is essential to building an equitable and high-quality public education system from the earliest years. House Bill 748 helps ensure that Maryland's prekindergarten expansion is supported by a sustainable, respected, and well-prepared workforce.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 748.

Thank you for your time and consideration.