

TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 659 – State Board of Education – Membership – Early Childhood Development Professional

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) would like to share the following information regarding **HB 659**, which would add an additional member to the State Board who is required to be an early childhood development professional with extensive experience in the operations of a child care business and early childhood curriculum and development.

The State Board appreciates the intent of this bill to ensure that the voice and perspectives of the early childhood community are well represented on the State Board. The experience and knowledge of early childhood professionals are valuable to the work of the State Board as we oversee early childhood programs in the state. We are fortunate to have current members of the State Board with extensive knowledge and experience related to early childhood education and care.

The Office of Child Care Advisory Council (OCCAC) and the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) are both entities currently in existence to provide information, feedback from the field, and expertise to the State Superintendent and the State Board as we deliberate over matters related to early childhood. Additionally, the State Board has established and maintained a Workgroup on Early Childhood Education and Care with a representative group of early childhood experts from OCCAC and ECAC to serve as a direct feedback mechanism to members of the State Board.

We have concerns with outlining further specific qualifications for additional members of the State Board to ensure that the Governor retains the flexibility to appoint members of the State Board who have a wide array of experiences and skill sets.

While we appreciate the thoughtfulness of the bill to ensure a robust and representative process for selecting an early childhood candidate, the OCCAC is not currently structured in a way to solicit candidates and build a review process. Standing up this process would compete with its mandate to review all regulations and policies related to early childhood education. We also register hesitation about the prospect of an operator in the child care business serving as a member on the board that regulates, licenses, and supports child care centers in Maryland given the associated conflicts of interest and business relationship.

The State Board requests that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 659**. Please contact Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.