



February 16, 2026

Testimony Regarding House Bill 659 – State Board of Education – Membership – Early Childhood Development Professional

We urge the Ways and Means committee to support HB659 – Early Childhood Development Professional Membership on the State Board of Education. This bill would allow for a seat to be dedicated to an early childhood development professional with extensive experience in the operations of a child care business and early childhood curriculum and development.

All child care in Maryland is regulated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), yet child care has no representation on its Board of Education, which sets the educational policy, passes regulations, and is empowered to interpret the true meaning and intent of the laws that govern them. The child care industry is in a crisis and leaders from the child care community deserve to have a voice in the decisions that impact their viability, quality, and sustainability. It is critical that child care leaders have a seat at the table to realize a more just and equitable early childhood system.

Research has proven that 90% of brain development occurs before the age of five. Including an early childhood professional on the board acknowledges that education does not begin at Kindergarten; it begins in early learning settings that shape language development, social-emotional skills, and cognitive growth.

Ultimately, if the Board of Education is responsible for preparing students for lifelong success, representation should reflect the full educational continuum – beginning at birth.

Submitted on behalf of the Children's Opportunity Alliance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

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The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](https://www.mocochildren.org) is a locally legislated Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity that brings community together to create a more equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.