



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

2810 Carrollton Road
Annapolis, Md. 21403
Phone: (410) 820-9196
Email: info@mscca.org
www.mscca.org

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 4500 members working in the field of early childhood. We believe children are our most important natural resources and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

February 17, 2020

Position: Supports with **Amendments**

Blueprint for Maryland's Future- Implementation (Policy Area One-Prekindergarten)

Senate Bill 1000 and House Bill 1300

MSCCA supports with amendments submitted, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. There are numerous praiseworthy aspects to the commission's work and legislation including, the reimagining of high school with college and career-ready pathways, doubling of Judy Centers and Family Support Centers, which support families and best family engagement policies and the emphasis on supporting teachers with more planning, professional development and higher compensation, which is long overdue. Teachers are the backbone of society. The teachers working in early childhood/child care programs are the constant support for parents working in Maryland. They work for some of the lowest wages and abide by the strictest and highest licensing standards in the nation. My community of members are gravely concerned that all of the requirements and quality initiatives they have earned, their dedication and experience in caring for and educating children has no value based on this legislation. The message is We are not good enough, even if readiness data shows our successes and children are in play based, developmentally appropriate environments with nurturing teachers/caregivers. We are and always have been willing partners in delivering pre-k and we are committed to continuously improve our practice in order to provide the best start for children in life.

The decline in early childhood education workforce and the lack of qualified candidates to meet the requirements in this legislation is a concern. The mandate is to hire bachelor degreed and certified teachers (a workforce that does not exist in the numbers that would be needed) and pay them the same as public school teachers is challenging at best. In addition, clear alternative pathways to teacher certification must be created for those currently working in early childhood, especially in community-based programs. MSCCA is part of the CCSSO/NGA Maryland team lead by MSDE working on the critical workforce shortages and workforce development issues by identifying barriers (number 1 is compensation) along with concrete solutions for alternative pathways with more credit for prior learning and experience, exploring a birth to five teacher certification program and focusing on real competencies needed in our field. We have included MHEC to solicit Maryland colleges and universities to develop and offer online bachelor's degree in early childhood that has a certification component. We shouldn't have to take revenue out of Maryland to enroll in online bachelor's degrees in other states to earn Early Childhood degrees, as it is an area of critical need.

The per-child cost for prekindergarten programming must ensure reasonable compensation for teacher pay and program implementation. The community-based programs are concerned that the per-child amount provided for the provision of prekindergarten may not be sufficient in all jurisdictions of the state due to community-based providers having many less resources than public schools, especially in the first few years of the phase in and would create a loss of revenue for some community-based programs. Funding models for quality must meet the higher compensation levels in order for community-based programs to compete to keep our children and doors open.

MSCCA's concerns are always about the health and well-being of children. Study after study has shown that young children need time to play. Early childhood teachers know that play is not frivolous; child care/early childhood teachers understand play enhances brain structure and promotes executive function, which allow them to pursue goals and ignore distractions. Play helps children learn to persevere, increase attention and navigate emotions. We don't see evidence in this legislation or recommendations from Kirwan that embrace this best practice in the most public-school models. We are now suggesting investing lots of money in the same approach and practices that aren't based in learning through play based curriculum, that aren't closing the achievement gap and that aren't getting children ready for kindergarten on average in Maryland at even the 50% mark. So we are pushing down to even younger children; academic testing of 3 and 4-year-olds; bussing 3 and 4 year-olds to school; shifting teacher focus away from engagement with children and towards testing and results; designing programs to match a public-school day rather than a parent's work day. Our members embrace the play with a purpose model, children's play is their work every day in our quality child care and early learning programs, which has children ready for kindergarten at the highest rates in our state and our programs are open to meet a working family's needs for 10-12 hours daily, many holidays and year round.

Finally, we must address the unintended consequence expanding public-school pre-K programs will have on infant and toddler care across Maryland. Childcare centers cannot remain in business caring for infants and toddlers alone; the staffing costs are too high. Many will close. For others, the only option is to raise prices resulting in only the wealthiest being able to afford vital infant and toddler care. This is one reason Washington D.C. leads the nation in infant care costs and New York City finds it hard to maintain affordable infant care. Let's not make the same mistakes.

We ask you consider our amendments and incorporate into this SB 1000 and HB 1300.