

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 677 (Senator Ferguson)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Education - Professional Development for Teachers and Providers of Early
Childhood Education - Master Plan

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), to develop a master plan to address the critical shortage of qualified professional teachers and child care providers in the early childhood education workforce. MSDE and MHEC must also jointly make recommendations on methods of attracting individuals to the field of early childhood education and retaining current teachers and providers. By December 31, 2015, MSDE and MHEC must submit the master plan and the recommendations to the Governor; the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee; and the House Committee on Ways and Means.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015, and terminates June 30, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE and MHEC can handle the bill's requirements using existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The master plan must focus on:

- creating early childhood education bachelor's degree programs at institutions of higher education in the State that focus on educating children from birth to age eight;

- establishing a continuum of high-quality professional development options in early childhood education for current and prospective providers of early childhood education, including family care child care providers, child care center-based providers, and Early Head Start and Head Start staff;
- implementing a professional development system that utilizes a nationally recognized early childhood education certificate program that accepts prior learning experience; and
- ensuring that regular, ongoing joint training of elementary school staff and early childhood education program staff who receive public prekindergarten funding is available.

Current Law/Background: Chapter 2 of 2014, the Prekindergarten Expansion Act, expanded access to public prekindergarten for students in families whose income is at or below 300% of poverty and provided State funding to support the expansion. In December 2014, the State was also awarded a four-year \$15 million federal grant to continue its expansion of public prekindergarten access to low-income students. As of November 2014, an additional 1,088 four-year-olds were enrolled in prekindergarten, and it is estimated that the first two years of the federal grant will provide prekindergarten access to an additional 2,788 students.

The expansion of public prekindergarten in the State requires an increase in the number of professionals with early childhood education degrees. The federal funding can only be used for programs meeting specified criteria, including licensed programs that are published at a level 5 on MD EXCELS. MD EXCELS is the State's tiered Quality Rating Improvement System for licensed child care centers, family child care providers, and public prekindergarten programs. In addition to other requirements, for a program to be published at a level 5, all teachers must hold a degree in early childhood education.

A shortage of qualified early childhood education and care staff in the State has been linked to the low wages the profession pays. According to the Maryland Family Network, annual wages for these professionals range from \$18,096 for center aides to \$38,997 for child care center directors. This represents a substantial discrepancy between the average salaries for full-time public elementary school teachers, who work a 10-month year and have an average salary of \$64,248.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1069 (Delegates Rosenberg and Kaiser) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Maryland Family Network, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 2015

md/rhh

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