

Quality Early Childhood Programs

(Adopted 2005; amended 2008; readopted 2011)

WHEREAS, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) serves as the voice of the public in public education and has demonstrated its commitment to the continued achievement of all students served by local boards of education; and

WHEREAS, decades of research has confirmed that quality educational components to early child care arrangements have a positive impact on children's development, well-being, and academic potential; and

WHEREAS, state school readiness research shows that children with formal child care experiences prior to entering kindergarten show higher levels of school readiness than children without formal child care; and

WHEREAS, many families throughout Maryland cannot afford formal child care arrangements and state funding for the Purchase of Care program, which is the state subsidy program to assist low-income families with child care expenses, has suffered significant budget cuts in recent years; and

WHEREAS, support of early childhood initiatives that enhance pre-school teaching skills, credentials, and professional development opportunities of child care providers and other early childhood professionals can ensure that participating children will have a meaningful opportunity to come to school ready to learn; and

WHEREAS, state investments in high quality early childhood education strengthen the opportunity for coordination between early childhood programs and public schools; and

WHEREAS, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), local school systems, and early education providers are implementing the Maryland model for school readiness, which incorporates research-based instruction, age-appropriate assessment of children's learning, and effective communication among teachers, parents, and early childhood providers to enhance school readiness through common goals and program assessments; and

WHEREAS, Maryland employs the Work Sampling System (WSS) as the early childhood assessment system used in kindergarten for the purpose of assessing entering kindergartners' skills in seven areas: social and personal development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development; and

WHEREAS, legislation enacted in 2005 transfers the Child Care Administration (CCA) within the Department of Human Resources (DHR), excluding the Purchase of Care child care subsidy program, to MSDE, and requires the State Superintendent of Schools to establish an early childhood development division within MSDE; and

WHEREAS, legislation enacted in 2005 requires MSDE to develop a plan for the accreditation of all existing early learning programs and child care programs providing full-day kindergarten classes or publicly funded prekindergarten programs for low-income four-year old children; and

WHEREAS, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 mandates that all local school systems provide universal full-day kindergarten and targeted pre-kindergarten programs for all economically disadvantaged four-year olds; and

WHEREAS, in 2007 the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education recommended the creation of a voluntary, free, universal preschool program, Preschool for All, with the goal of providing early education to all four-year-olds in Maryland by 2014;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MABE urges the Maryland state legislature, the Congress of the United States, and the executive branches of both state and federal governments, to increase funding for quality early childhood programs, to include but not be limited to the Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE urges the General Assembly and Governor to ensure adequate and equitable capital and operating funding, including full funding for any mandated early childhood programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE supports statewide initiatives that provide funding for and access to affordable, high quality early childhood programs, including child care services, that are aligned with state and local school system learning standards and goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE supports local discretion to develop and implement early education programs in school facilities or in conjunction with private providers, and opposes state mandated agreements between school systems and private providers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE urges the Governor and General Assembly to provide increased funding for the Purchase of Care program and other state programs providing access to affordable, high quality child care and early education programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE encourages local school systems to partner with their local child care community, local organizations, and local departments of health and human services, to provide culturally appropriate training to early child care and education providers on the school systems' learning standards and goals.