

Quality Early Childhood Programs

(Adopted 2005; amended 2008; readopted 2011; amended 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018)

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, recognizing that many families throughout Maryland cannot afford formal child care arrangements, for many years the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has administered the Purchase of Care Program, now the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Program, to provide financial assistance with child care costs to low-income families through each local department of social services; and

WHEREAS, support of early childhood initiatives that enhance preschool 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, beginning in 2001, MSDE, local school systems, and early education providers implemented the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), which incorporates research-based instruction, age-appropriate assessment of children's learning, and effective communication among teachers, parents and guardians, and early childhood providers to enhance school readiness through common goals and program assessments; and

WHEREAS, Maryland has employed 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, MSDE launched a new school readiness assessment system in 2014-2015, which includes new Kindergarten Ready Assessments (KRAs); and

WHEREAS, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 mandated that by the 2007-2008 school year all local school systems provide universal full-day kindergarten and targeted half-day prekindergarten programs for all economically disadvantaged four-year olds based on 185% of the federal poverty guidelines; and

WHEREAS, legislation enacted in 2005 transferred the Child Care Administration (CCA) from the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to MSDE; required the State Superintendent of Schools to establish an early childhood development division within MSDE; and required 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, 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; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Preschool for All Business Plan called for expanding access to prekindergarten to families earning less than 300% of the federal poverty guidelines, and proposed funding the expansion through a new categorical fund program similar to the previous Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP); and

WHEREAS, Maryland received a \$50 million federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant to support improvements in school readiness for economically disadvantaged, English language learners, students with disabilities, and all students, to increase the school readiness rate from 81% to 92%; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 the General Assembly enacted the \$4.3 million Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program to expand access to prekindergarten services to additional eligible four-year-old children from families whose income is no more than 300% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG). The competitive grant program is available to qualified public and private prekindergarten providers; and

WHEREAS, including prekindergarten students as enrolled students would require critically needed increases in state and local funding, including funding for school facilities based on total enrollment; and

WHEREAS, the funding adequacy study contracted by the state between 2014 and 2016 includes the study of prekindergarten services and proposes alternative funding structures, including income-based fees, and recommends providing funding for 80% of Maryland's four-year-olds to attend either a public prekindergarten program or a high quality private program based on state and national ratings; and

WHEREAS, legislation enacted in 2016 created the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education which is charged with reviewing the Study on Adequacy of Funding for Education in the State of Maryland, and making recommendations regarding the preferred approach to expanding publicly funded prekindergarten education; and

WHEREAS, legislation enacted in 2017 created the Workgroup to Study the Implementation of Universal Access to Prekindergarten for 4-Year-Olds to make recommendations regarding an implementation plan, based on APA Consulting's January 2016 report "A Comprehensive Analysis of Prekindergarten in Maryland", to make quality, full-day prekindergarten universally available through public and nonpublic school programs to children who are four years old; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 the legislature provided more than \$17 million in supplemental grants for local school systems which offer a full-day program for all four-year-olds who are enrolled in public prekindergarten; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 legislation was enacted to require the Governor to annually appropriate to the Prekindergarten Expansion Fund an amount that is at least equal to all state and federal revenues received by the fund in the previous fiscal year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MABE urges the Governor and General Assembly, 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 a per pupil funding allocation for students attending prekindergarten, including a 0.5 FTE for half-day students and 1.0 FTE for full-day students, without any off-setting reduction in compensatory education funding, so that all school systems receive additional state aid for their high quality prekindergarten 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 adequately fund the Child Care Subsidy 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.