

**Office of Child Care (OCC)
Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2024**

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME	
Attendees *Names taken from chat box.	Council members:	Shay Gurry, Sierra Mehlbrech on behalf of Del. Feldmark, Diane Mellott, Lacey Eidman, JoAnne Jamison, Shannon Burroughs-Campbell, Dona Mullen, Christina Peusch, and Ruby Daniels
	Guests:	Tony Wohlers, Bonita Bordley, Amanda Holliday-Bembridge, Caitlyn Holley, Sandra Buckwalter, Dana Ashley, Charo Torres, Laura Jahromi, Karen Monroe, Debbie Moore, Jody Payne, Jen Seidenberg, Tiffany Jones, Christina Lopez, Jennifer Arnáiz, Rachel Amstutz, Carolina Venegas, Carolina Reyes, and Christina Lopez
	MSDE Staff:	Tharcisse Yamuremye, Shantia Spencer, Shayna Cook, Sherry Tsigounis, Rene' D. Williams, Alexis D. Washington, and Keisha Maxwell
Welcome and Opening Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chris P. welcomed everyone to the meeting and told them to add their names to the chat for attendance purposes. ● Chris P. provided a review with the expectation for the meeting outcomes. 	
Office of Child Care Leadership Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Shayna Cook (Assistant State Superintendent, MSDE): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program and its historic state budget- Governor Moore proposed to allocate close to \$500 million dollars to the Scholarship Program. ○ The Governor also proposed a co-payment sliding scale, which is aligned with the state medium income, to cover the overall funding gaps for the sustainability of the Child Care Scholarship Program. This is in alignment with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) notice of proposed 2024 rulemaking. (7% of a family's income) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chris Added: This is historic. It's not money from the Feds but money from our state. This is a result of advocates fighting for this. This money seems to be protected. Also, there are other bills trying to carve out the need for co-payments that we hope the legislators will find the money from somewhere to avoid the need for copays. We also 	

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	<p>know there are issues regarding scholarship payments, portals and true-up. We are here you and I will allow Dr. Cook to talk about it. I also want to congratulate MSDE on the OneStop portal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MSDE holds a stakeholder meeting with associations and organizations like the Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) regularly to discuss concerns. ○ Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program- Close to releasing OneStop, which we anticipate will be very user friendly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chris Added: ITIN numbers can now be used to participate in programs, such as the Credentialing program. ○ Legislative Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HB 831 (<i>Common Ownership Communities and Zoning Authorities - Operation of Family Child Care Homes - Limitations</i>) – Goal to decrease barriers for child care providers that are impacted by certain restrictions due to zoning and HOA requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sierra Mehlbrech (Delegate Feldmark’s office) Added: MSDE did a good job providing a summary of HB 381. Regarding HB 1385 (<i>Early Childhood Education - Prekindergarten Providers - Resident and Conditional Teaching Certificates</i>), this bill requires MSDE to establish early childhood teaching certificates for private preschool providers. This would help incentivize people to get into all fields of childcare. ▪ SB 500 (<i>Education - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund - Alterations</i>) -Child Care Career and Professional (CCDPDF) Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Service hour commitments increased from 10 hours a week to 20 hours per week. ● Will prioritize educators who are seeking higher education degrees, who never received high education credits previously. ● Push for higher education to provide coursework and classes in native languages. ▪ HB 662 (<i>Large Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers - Child Care Teachers - Minimum Age The minimum</i>) -The

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	<p>current age for qualified child care teachers is 19, the bill will decrease the age requirement to 18.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SB 59 (<i>Safe Sleep for Infants- Awareness and Certification</i>) - This bill is seeking to create a collaboration between Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and MSDE. Bill focuses on child care centers being required to receive certification on safe sleep, in addition to other training requirements. MSDE already covers a lot of what the bill requires. ▪ Chris Added: Please note there is additional legislation being heard and that we only limit it to the ones previously discussed because they have been heard and/or the hearings are upcoming. However, if you have any questions about any legislation, please let Chris and Dr. Cook know. ○ The Prekindergarten sliding scale will be presented to the Education Transformation and Accountability Committee. The meeting is open to the public. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FY 25 last year for PreK expansion grant, hope to get data from participants and persons that are not, regarding the children served. Private providers will be transferred. ▪ Private providers need to connect with their Local Education Agency (LEA) and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) so PreK seats can be counted. September 30th, LEA's capture enrollment and send it to MSDE. Private providers need to count the number of children as well and know the tiers. ▪ MSDE created a Pre-K calculator. ▪ Tiers 1 -3 were discussed. ● Alexis Washington (Communications and Engagement Manager, MSDE): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhanced Child Care Support and Teacher Retention Award (ECSTRA) Retention Bonus Update. (Slide) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This program is a retention bonus program for eligible early educators. Pays program participants monetary bonuses. ▪ The purpose is to reduce turnover rates in licensed child care programs and to provide definitive evidence on the importance of offering larger wage increases for early educators. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Randomly small groups were selected.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bonuses paid in two halves, 5th and end of 8th month. Must remain at the sight for eight months. ▪ 5, 446 ECSTRA applicants were part of the lottery in November 2023 ▪ What's next: Employment verification to determine which participants are eligible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End of 5-month period, 1st retention period is March 20, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment Verification survey ○ \$35 to site directors for their completion of the employment survey. ▪ Communication and processing coming up. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tuesday Tidbits Post ● Email to ECSTRA winners. ● Email to site leaders. ● Employment Verification forms on Qualtrics ● Email status to participants. ● Payments processed and distributed. ▪ Dr. Cook and Chris Added: The goal is to provide sustainable bonuses long term to impact compensation. ○ Public Prekindergarten grant Applications for FY 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Push for Pre-K progress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Link to the website shared. ● Final session out of four sessions, just wrapped up. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maryland EXCELS requirements. ○ Licensing requirements ○ Educational program, defining a high quality Pre-K program and finding qualified staff members ○ Grant writing tips ● Recordings and resources are available on the website. ● Presentations and transcripts are being translated into Spanish. ▪ Dr. Cook Added: Technical assistance sessions will continue. Also, there will be changes to simplify the application. Anticipate changing the teacher qualifications as well.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MSDE is planning to release the FY 2025 Pre-K grant opportunities by Spring 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chris Added: Some members feel spring is too late because the person must then respond, then wait for the response and prepare. As a result, members feel this should take place earlier. As a council, delegates please let us know what we can do to support the change in the timing.
<p>Regulatory Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Louis Valenti (Licensing, MSDE): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Licensing is constantly working on revising the regulations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senate Bill 59, Safe Sleep: Regulation amendments were posted for public comment on January 12th to February 12th. The amendments firm up the requirements for safe sleep. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flat, non-inclined surface with no weighted items in the crib for under 12 months of age. ▪ School Age amendments: Posted for public comment from January 26th to February 26th. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The amendments would increase the group size for school age programs. ● Please note there will be some additional changes made but for now please comment on what's currently posted. ▪ Rest time safety (napping child different level): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No regulation change but a revision to clarify the regulation requirement due to some misinterpretation. ● Updates to come. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chris Added: This is a hot topic, and we want to make sure the council is made aware and we are requesting to see the revisions. Then we can possibly discuss this at the upcoming meeting in May. ▪ Outdoor Nature Based Program regulations: Currently having monthly meetings with stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Department of Health and Department of Environment involved because it impacts their requirements. ▪ Emergency sanction regulation amendments went into effect on December 25th.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chris Added: The regulation changes would allow flexibility for MSDE not to shut down a child care program. It would the flexibility to close a classroom instead so families would not be left without childcare. ○ Annual Basic Health and Safety Update: Everyone working in child care programs are required to take the 2023 update, which has been available since the end of 2023, and has to be completed by March 30th. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Now includes an important segment on active supervision due to an increase in children being left unsupervised. ▪ The course is free and online. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chris Added: Isn't there a requirement to get a certain percentage, to pass? There is a minimum grade requirement. <i>-Alexis Washington</i>
<p>New Business and Presentations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rachael Amstutz (Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB))- rachelv.amstutz@maryland.gov <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction of other members, a small team of 10 currently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lisa Armstrong- Pillar 4 yet have a love for Pillar 1. ▪ Libby Diamond- Pillar 1 and Pillar 3 ▪ Ruby Daniels- Chair, AIBs Pillar 1 Advisory Committee ○ What's the AIB? In the Blueprint law under Pillar 5, the AIB was created to serve as an oversight board to monitor and measure the implementation of Blueprint. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides technical assistance. ▪ Identify challenges and hurdles. ▪ Help support in the effort to implement Blueprint law. ○ AIB is working hard to connect with as many stakeholders that we can. ○ Alternative Quality Requirements and Structural Elements for Private Prekindergarten Providers to Participate in Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs, p. 190: Joint Chairmen's report, the AIB was charged with the last legislative session. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently available on the website for anyone to read. Dr. Cook was instrumental in helping with this report. ▪ The biggest goal was to make sure input from stakeholders was included.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The biggest recommendation was to continue the convenings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report request, page 4. • Convening information included. • AIB Advisory Committee is very active through this process. • Want to highlight the Importance of Partnerships between LEAs and Private Providers, page 5. • Implementation hurdles are being found and addressed. • The bulk of the report starts on page 12, Recommendations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore continuing structural strategies currently initiated ○ Maximize available resources ○ Create, strengthen, and disseminate information on early childhood employee pathways ○ Alleviate Barrier to Higher Education ○ Explore Additional Pathways to Certification ○ Increase Guidance and Support • Next steps, bottom of page 15. Items that can be done immediately and plan to do in the short term. • List of participants, page 19. ○ Reach out to both her and Ruby (rubygd33@gmail.com) to share thoughts and help us understand what implementation challenges you have. ○ Please follow the AIB Advisory Committee, which usually meets the first Thursday of each month. • Tony Wohlers (Harford Community College) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Childcare Apprenticeship Overview (SLIDE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Started last January, MSDE has been a strong supporter of the program. ▪ Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Context- MSDE supported, registered with the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordination and Oversight- Coordinator and Committee ● Cost Structure- MSDE pays \$900/student/6 months for total of \$2,700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussed: Time commitment, curriculum, modality, and employment ▪ Success Measures and Impact ▪ Vision and Testimonials ○ Apprentices are from multiple regions in Maryland. ○ Several staff from the same program can participate. ○ No cost to child care programs that participate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chris Added: This is a statewide initiative! You can join, no matter where you are from. Having supports in Spanish would be great as well.
<p>Comments, Questions & Feedback from Council Members and Attendees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regarding HB 1385, clarification regarding enrollment was requested. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Cook Added: For the 2027-2028 school year, the only requirement is enrollment in a certification CDA or AA program. Changes were made to every aspect of Blueprint, except for Pre-K Expansion. ● Regarding SB 59- clarification regarding centers vs large families was requested. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Cook Added: The bill does not include large family homes, just child care centers. ● Regarding ECSTRA, what is the employment verification documentation required? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alexis Added: It will be the same list as the initial one. Just a Qualtrics with you clicking yes, he/she is still at the program, as long as the program is still operational.
<p>Branch Updates/Council Member Reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop engagement opportunities for 2024. Want to do more than just report out. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on a specific topic. ○ Polls/Surveys for OCC Advisory council to solicit feedback. ○ Sharing highlights. ● Shared ideas to discuss best practices from child care programs, regarding issues such as supervision, that may be beneficial and of assistance within other programs. Can plan for this in the May meeting.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDA funding opportunity is still available. The application closed for the training, but MFN is still accepting applications for book bundles and the CDA application fee. -<i>Lacey Eidman</i> • Regarding the comment about supporting the Infant and Toddler program to ensure the children receive needed services, the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services can assist. Maybe they can possibly join the next time around. -<i>Dr. Cook</i> • MSDE is finalizing a survey that will be released. The survey is going to capture market rate, cost modeling and workforce data, which will help us understand the make up of the workforce. Look out for updates to come. -<i>Dr. Cook</i>
<p>Meeting Adjourned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council approved the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. • Thanks everyone!
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">May 16, 2024</p> <p style="text-align: center;">**Meeting was later rescheduled for May 23, 2024.**</p>