



Testimony Concerning HB 467
Education-Teacher Certification-Montessori Schools
Submitted to Education Health and Environmental Affairs
February 10, 2022

Position: Support

As a longtime resident of Prince George's County and knowing the significant waitlists our public Montessori programs carry, I was thrilled when the third county Montessori school opened in 2010. Montessori education offers students from all backgrounds an excellent academic foundation while also fostering social emotional skills and instilling vital 21st century competencies such as collaboration, interdisciplinary learning, and independence. However, our Montessori programs face significant hurdles due to the lack of a pathway to state teacher certification for Montessori trained teachers; the passage of HB 467 is critical to ensuring that Maryland's public Montessori schools have the highly qualified teachers our children deserve.

As a former Montessori school administrator, I know how vital it is to have properly trained teachers in all Montessori classrooms. Montessori certification ensures that teachers know how to work across all 3 ages of children within their classroom, scaffold instruction and individualize it to each child's needs, offer lessons on the classroom's unique hands-on materials, and optimize the classroom environment so that children build confidence, critical thinking skills, and self-discipline alongside their academic pursuits.

As the Executive Director of the Montessori Public Policy Initiative, I am privy to the national landscape of Montessori education policy. Currently 9 states have recognized the rigor of Montessori teacher preparation and have created a pathway to state teacher certification. South Carolina, the first to create such a pathway, currently has 44 public Montessori programs across 22 districts. A recent 5-year study of those schools showed that participation in Montessori programs reduced student achievement gaps and that Montessori students experienced significantly greater achievement growth in ELA, math, and social studies than demographically matched non-Montessori students. All the classrooms in that study had a properly trained Montessori teacher.

We know that Maryland values having highly qualified teaching staff in all classrooms, and for Montessori classrooms that means having an individual with specific training for teaching in a Montessori classroom. Individuals that have a bachelor's degree plus a Montessori credential from a program accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) or issued by the American Montessori Society (AMS) or the Association Montessori International (AMI) have completed a program which includes a rigorous, graduate level course of study that includes child-development, level specific subject matter, curriculum, instructional planning, assessment, family partnership, supports for learning differences and culturally responsive teaching in addition to a significant student teaching component.

www.montessoriadvocacy.org
info@montessoriadvocacy.org

Currently, because of the lack of a pathway to certification, Maryland's Montessori programs are frequently unable to recruit teachers who have gone through this rigorous Montessori training and must hire state certified teachers and then send them to training. This means our students enrolled in Montessori schools are not getting the most from being in a Montessori setting. In addition, the schools must dedicate both financial resources to send teachers to get their training and administrative resources to support teachers who are in a classroom environment they are not trained to teach in, both of which could be better allocated to serve students if Montessori trained teachers were able to obtain a state teaching certificate.

The passage of HB 467 will not only help ensure students in our Montessori schools have highly qualified teachers, but it will also make conventionally trained teachers who are currently working in Montessori schools available for open positions elsewhere in the state system, thereby helping to address the teacher shortage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy SE". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a stylized "SE" at the end.

Wendy Shenk-Evans
Executive Director