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Testimony Concerning HB 0467
Education - Teacher Certification - Montessori Schools
Submitted to House Ways & Means Committee
Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair

Position: Support

Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc., (MMCI) strongly supports HB 0467. MMCI was the first charter operator in the state of Maryland and currently operates two public Montessori charter schools in Frederick County. MMCI has recently been approved by Frederick County to create the first public Montessori charter high school program in the state of Maryland. Our schools average 1200 students on the waitlist each year.

Montessori schools have served as strong contributors to Maryland's public-school system and have produced strong academic results. Moreover, these schools provide additional educational options for families. There are currently a total of six public Montessori schools in Maryland: the two public Montessori Charter Schools in Frederick County, one public Montessori Charter School in Baltimore City, and three public Montessori Magnet Schools in Prince George's County. These schools serve over 2,125 children throughout the state and carry significant waitlists.

Currently, Maryland's certification process does not recognize the Montessori credential as a pathway to state certification, creating an undue hardship on public Montessori schools. Hiring qualified teachers who are both Montessori credentialed and meet Maryland's teaching certification requirements remains a challenge for many Montessori schools; the pipeline for these teachers is significantly strained in the public sector due to the double certification requirement. HB 0467 will create a much-needed pathway to state teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers. Acknowledgement of the rigor and quality of Montessori teacher education will ensure that Montessori classrooms have appropriately trained teachers, promoting fidelity to the model and the best outcomes for children.

At MMCI's public Montessori Charter Schools, Carroll Creek Montessori and Monocacy Valley Montessori, the shortage of qualified montessori teachers has forced the hiring of non-montessori certified teachers, creating an additional burden on the schools to fund Montessori training for their staff. This creates a number of obstacles which short-change our students and our teachers:

- We have used limited funds from our budget to pay for the Montessori training needed,
- We have spent significant personnel resources on coaching and supporting teachers, working in an environment they are unprepared for,
- Montessori training is rigorous graduate level work and it is taxing for our teachers to spend their first 2-3 years in a Montessori school teaching as well as completing rigorous coursework during their personal time,
- Frederick County Public Schools is now recognizing Montessori certification classes for a small portion of the teacher licensing renewal process, but does not fully recognize the number of hours teachers have spent in gaining their certification, thus limiting their compensation for continuing education.

The mission of Monocacy Montessori Communities is to provide all children in Frederick County access to a high-quality Montessori education that is free of charge through the establishment and management of public Montessori charter schools. HB 0467 will ensure that public Montessori schools are able to hire the best and most qualified educators in pursuit of this mission.

MMCI urges a positive report on HB 0467. Thank you for your consideration.

Tara Dunsmore



President, Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc.