

WHEREAS, Nearly 85% of brain development occurs in the first 5 years of life and research has proven that a child's early years are the most crucial in their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development; and

WHEREAS, It also has been affirmed that early childhood education measurably impacts kindergarten through grade 12 student achievement, as well as a child's ability to integrate into society as a productive, contributing member; and

WHEREAS, The legislature finds that every \$1 invested on quality early childhood education saves \$7 in welfare and penal system costs through improved student achievement, increased college attendance rates, and a corresponding reduction in crime and the need for welfare; and

WHEREAS, Early childhood education encourages and provides the support that friends need to improve the quality of life of children by ensuring that children have enhanced access to a good beginning in life, laying the firm foundation that will enable children to reach the potential with which they are born; and

WHEREAS, The legislature recognizes the importance of providing children with early learning opportunities of the highest quality, including parenting programs, parent-child education programs, licensed and license-exempt child care, and center-based programs; and

WHEREAS, Early childhood education programs, both public and private, should meet professionally-accepted standards and be staffed by well-trained, appropriately-compensated educators; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this Act is to:

(1) Improve early childhood education by establishing and appropriating funds for a temporary early childhood education task force to develop a framework to increase access to early childhood education;

(2) Improve the quality of early childhood learning programs;

(3) Support the professional and career development of early childhood educators and service providers;

(4) Educate families about the value of early childhood education;

(5) Identify funding mechanisms to appropriately compensate early childhood educators; and

(6) Increase the inventory of available facilities for early childhood education programs; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(a) There is a Task Force on Universal Preschool Education.

(b) The Task Force shall consist of ~~23 members as follows~~ the following members: