

Preamble

WHEREAS, The foundations of lifelong learning and well-being are based on the experiences of early childhood; and

WHEREAS, Maryland has invested in many programs to improve the early experiences of the State's children; and

WHEREAS, These programs have the potential to move the State toward the achievement of one of its foremost goals – that all children arrive at school with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in school and later in life; and

WHEREAS, One of foremost challenges faced by early childhood programs is that they are spread among different State agencies, rather than residing in a single agency that has as its core mission the continuum of learning from birth through high school; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland State Department of Education, which embraces this core mission and already houses a number of major early childhood programs, could provide a unified home for all the programs that nurture and educate the State's children; and

WHEREAS, The benefits of such a reorganization would be substantial, in that the programs would reside in an agency that approaches its work with families and children through an “asset-based” model that identifies strengths and builds on them, rather than focusing solely on deficiencies and remediation; and

WHEREAS, The State's involvement in early child care would thus be understood as beneficial to all children, not just disadvantaged children; and

WHEREAS, Located in a single department, programs could more easily be aligned to support development from birth to completion of high school, and the department being held accountable for children's educational achievement under the No Child Left Behind Act and the Bridge to Excellence in Public Education Act would be in a far stronger position to accomplish that goal; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That Section(s) 2-303(j) of Article – Education of the Annotated Code of Maryland be renumbered to be Section(s) 2-303(k).

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section(s) 5-559 and 5-585.1 of Article – Family Law of the Annotated Code of Maryland be repealed.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section(s) 46 through 50, respectively, and the subheading “Maryland School-Based Health Policy Advisory Council” of Article 49D – Office for Children, Youth, and Families of the Annotated Code of Maryland be transferred to be Section(s) 7-4A-01 through 7-4A-05, respectively, and the subtitle “Subtitle 4A. Maryland School-Based Health Policy Advisory Council” of Article – Education of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section(s) 6-801 through 6-807, respectively, and the subtitle “Subtitle 8. Maryland After-School Opportunity