

Financing of Early Child Care and Education; providing for the purpose, duties, and membership of the Commission; providing for the terms and compensation of its members; providing for the appointment of its members; requiring the Commission to meet at certain times and issue reports on or before certain dates; providing for the termination of the Commission and the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the creation of a Commission charged with studying the financing of early child care and education in the State.

Preamble

WHEREAS, Maryland's greatest resource is its children; and

WHEREAS, Maryland's youngest children must receive an early child care and education that provide a safe, nurturing, educational, and culturally affirming environment, in order to ensure that they enter the school system prepared to succeed; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, the State annual average cost for full-time child care for a child 5 years or younger was \$6,112; and

WHEREAS, Nationally, approximately 60% of the \$40 billion spent annually on early child care and education is paid by the families of those children; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of the money spent goes to pay for direct services to children, with only a small percentage supporting infrastructure, such as quality assurance and capital costs for facilities; and

WHEREAS, A growing body of research has revealed the critical importance of early child care and education to later achievement and learning; and

WHEREAS, While the State and federal governments support public education and provide substantial support to public colleges, and State and federal governments make substantial contributions targeted to early child care and education for low-income families, public funding of early child care and education for middle-income families is minimal; and

WHEREAS, Nationally, experts in financing are reviewing new approaches to funding early child care and education services, including approaches modeled after the funding mechanisms used for higher education; and

WHEREAS, A blue ribbon commission created by the State would make possible an intensive review of innovative approaches to funding early child care and education, including approaches modeled after methods used in financing higher education, transportation, and housing; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

(a) There is a Judith P. Hoyer Blue Ribbon Commission on the Financing of Early Child Care and Education.

(b) The purpose of the Commission is to examine the costs and availability of funding for early child care and education.