



Barriers to Child Care Providers Participation in State-Funded Prekindergarten Programs

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Challenges and Opportunities

Division of Early Childhood in collaboration with the Maryland Department of
Commerce

September 15, 2024

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Purpose

Section 39 Participation in Prekindergarten Programs

SECTION 39. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that \$110,000 of the general fund appropriation in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Early Childhood and \$110,000 of the general fund appropriation in the Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce) made for the purpose of administration may not be expended until MSDE and Commerce conduct a blind survey of private and public prekindergarten and child care providers and submit a report to the budget committees detailing the findings from the survey and options to address the identified barriers. The survey shall request information about the factors preventing providers from participating in publicly funded prekindergarten programs and the reasons that providers choose not to participate. The report shall be submitted by September 15, 2024, and the budget committees shall have 45 days from the date of the receipt of the report to review and comment. Funds restricted pending the receipt of a report may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any purpose and shall revert to the General Fund if the report is not submitted to the budget committees.

The General Assembly is interested in understanding the barriers hindering child care providers from participating in the State's publicly funded prekindergarten programs. This language restricts funding until MSDE and Commerce conduct a blind survey of providers and submit a joint report to the budget committees on the survey findings.

One of the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is to expand access to high quality full-day Pre-K each year for three- and four-year-olds from income-eligible families. MSDE seeks to ensure that fulfilling this goal is a priority for the Department. MSDE expands access to Pre-K through a mixed delivery model. The mixed delivery Pre-K model offers preschool programs in a variety of settings to meet families' needs. These settings include local education agencies (LEAs) as well as non-LEA settings, such as Head Start programs, community-based child care centers, family child care homes, and private schools. MSDE funds this mixed delivery Pre-K model through two programs: the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and Blueprint Formula Funding.

Through the Division of Early Childhood, MSDE administers a competitive grant program, the Pre-K Expansion Grant, in collaboration with the Division of Financial Policy, Planning, Operations, and Strategy. The Pre-K Expansion grant is used to expand access to high-quality Pre-K by increasing the number of available seats, improving existing seats from half-day to full-day, increasing teacher compensation, and providing additional resources to support high quality programming. This grant program broadens the availability of and expands access to high-quality Pre-K and school readiness services for three- and four-year-old income-eligible students through a mixed-delivery system. Grant funds must be used to administer full-day Pre-K programming that meets the definition of high-quality, as defined in the Blueprint. Maryland Pre-K Programs must have developmentally appropriate classrooms that are well-equipped to address the needs of all children including those with disabilities, early multilingual learners, and children experiencing homelessness.

Additionally, high quality Pre-K seats are expanded through Blueprint Formula funding. This funding is distributed directly to LEAs and private providers. The same high-quality standards and structural elements are required for both Blueprint funded and Pre-K Expansion seats. Blueprint funding allows those families with incomes at and below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level to have access to send

their children to full-day Pre-K at no cost. Prekindergarten ensures that all children in Maryland are prepared to enter kindergarten having received a high-quality Pre-K education. Blueprint formula funding, with the goal of expanding and increasing access to Maryland's full-day public Pre-K programs, will support the growth of the mixed-delivery Pre-K system for the next six years and beyond.

In an effort to expand access to high quality Pre-K, there is a focus on increasing private providers participating in publicly funded Pre-K through the Pre-K Expansion Grant program. MSDE provides technical assistance, has launched a variety of early learning initiatives, and works with LEAs to stimulate private provider participation.

For example, in 2023, MSDE launched an initiative for private providers, [PUSH to Pre-K](#), to increase awareness of publicly funded Pre-K and provide information regarding Pre-K grant opportunities, financial benefits, and program requirements. The initiative provides specific information about the Blueprint and Pre-K grant opportunities.

MSDE supports LEAs to implement specific strategies to assist with engaging private providers in their local school area about Pre-K grant opportunities. LEAs conduct outreach and support local private providers. In addition to expanding access across the state, LEAs and Head Start programs have been able to convert half-day seats to full-day seats using state Pre-K grant funds. This has provided additional opportunities for families to have access to full-day, high quality early learning.

Through gathering data on current practices, researching successful models from other states, and hearing from private providers directly, MSDE seeks to better understand and engage private providers in an intentional way to increase participation in State funded Pre-K. This report will provide information on the challenges faced by providers and why they choose not to participate in State funded Pre-K.

Methodology

The barriers to child care providers' participation in the State-Funded Prekindergarten programs survey was conducted from July 31, 2024, to August 16, 2024. The survey targeted all licensed and registered child care programs across the state of Maryland, with a total of 6,681 child care business owners and operators included in the population.

The survey was distributed electronically via email, with the content developed by the MSDE in collaboration with experts from the Maryland Department of Commerce. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

The primary objective of the survey was to identify and understand the barriers that prevent child care providers from participating in state-funded Pre-K programs. To ensure relevance and accuracy, the survey employed logic to guide respondents through questions specifically tailored to their experiences.

The survey gathered information on several key areas, including:

- The type of child care program operated.
- Specific barriers encountered in participating in state-funded Pre-K programs.
- The level of knowledge among owners and operators regarding available grant opportunities for providing Pre-K services.

The majority of the survey consisted of closed-ended, multiple-choice questions, allowing for structured and consistent data collection. Additionally, an open-ended question was included at the end of the survey to allow respondents to provide further explanation or additional insights beyond the predefined options.

This methodology ensured a comprehensive and structured approach to understanding the challenges faced by child care providers in Maryland with respect to participating in state-funded Pre-K initiatives.

Survey Results

The results of the survey identified barriers faced by child care programs participating in Pre-K initiatives and revealed several key challenges. The data reveal that issues such as funding limitations, regulatory complexities, and staffing shortages are key concerns of respondents. These are significant obstacles for many programs. These findings highlight the difficulties child care providers encounter in aligning with state Pre-K standards and accessing the necessary resources to participate effectively. The insights gained from this survey will be crucial in developing future strategies to support child care programs and expand access to high-quality Pre-K. These results are presented graphically below in two sections. The first section contains overall results while the second section contains results disaggregated by provider type (Figure 1).

OVERALL RESULTS

A total of 2,386 providers, representing 35.7% of all 6,681 providers active on August 19, 2024, responded to the survey. This number comprised 1,086 (46%) child care centers (including head start programs), 177 (7%) letter of compliance (LOC) facilities, 1,048 (44%) family child care homes, and 75 (3%) large family child care homes (see Figure 1). These provider type respondents represented 45%, 92%, 27%, and 48% of their respective total provider types. The two distributions of the respondents are presented in Figures 1 and 2, and their responses to the survey questions are presented in Figures 3 to 8.

Figure 1 - Survey Respondents by Provider Type

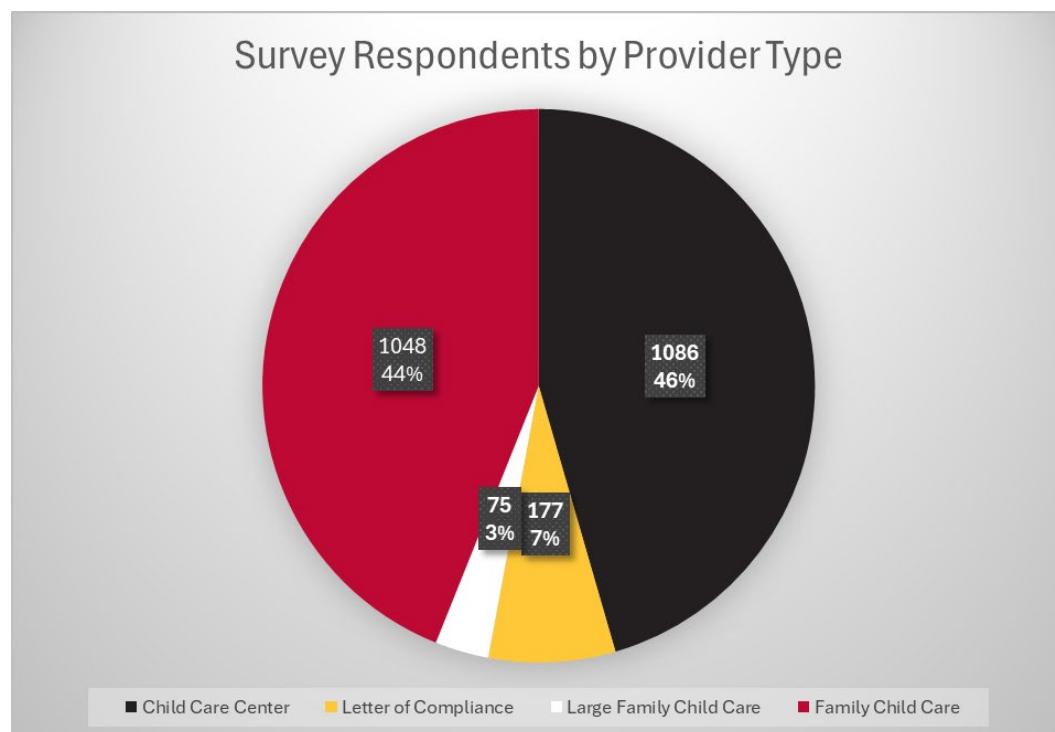


Figure 2 - Survey Respondents by County

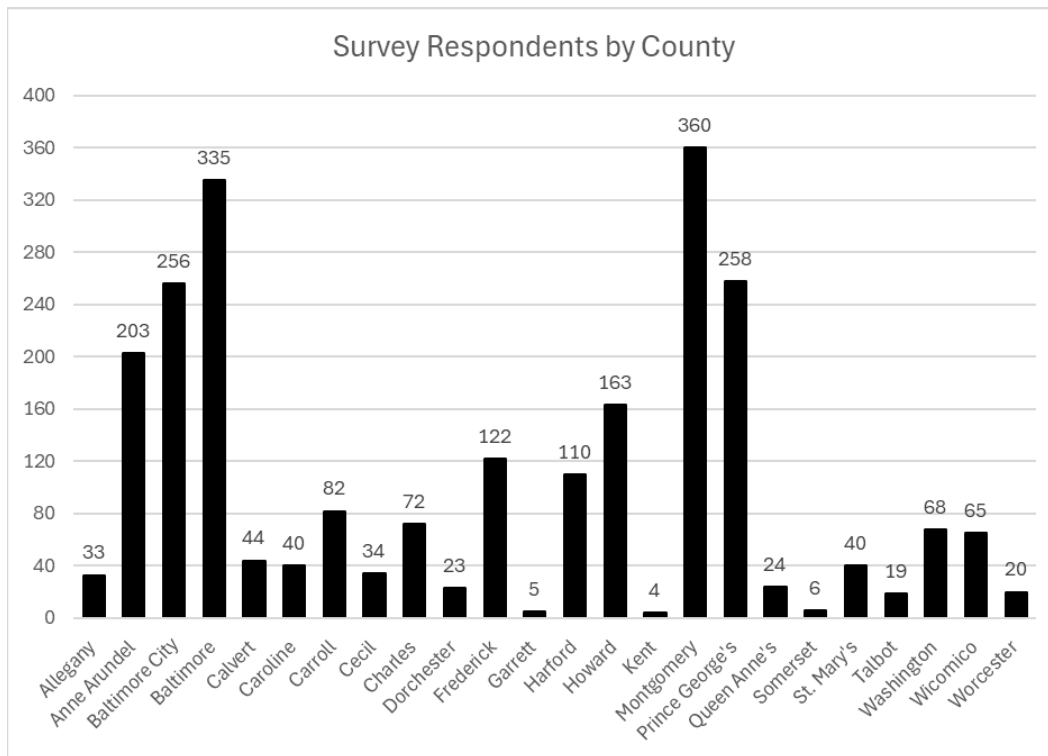


Figure 3 - Provider Familiarity with State-Funded with the Pre-K Expansion Grant

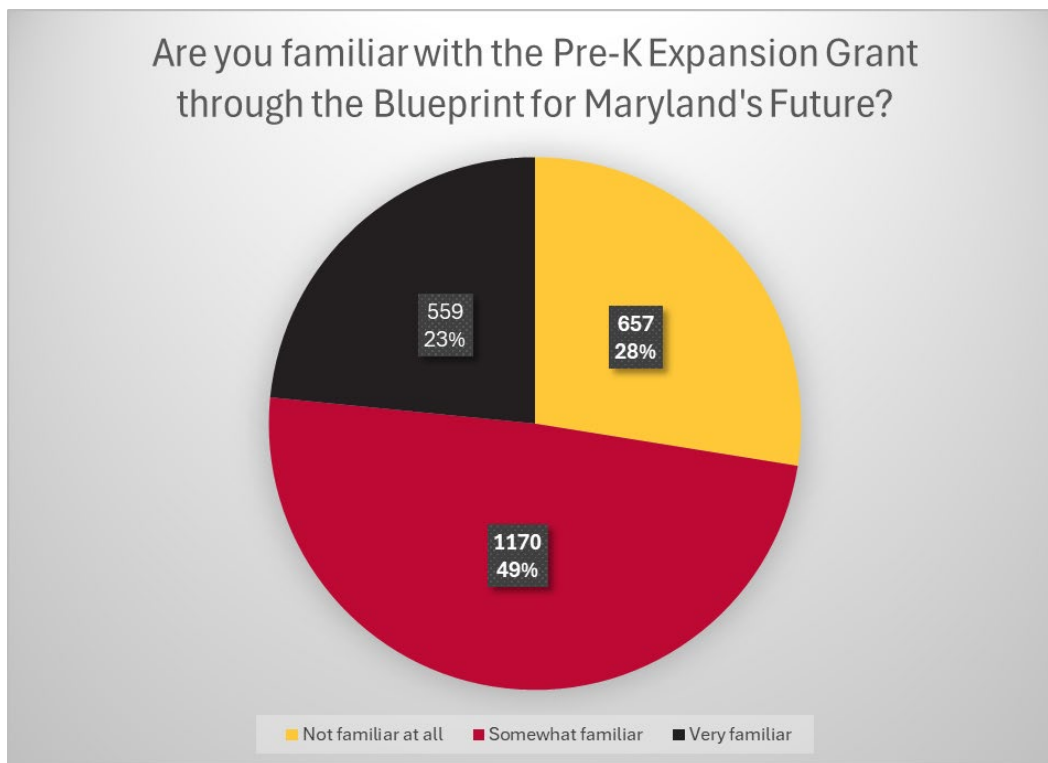


Figure 4 - Provider Familiarity with the State-Funded Pre-K Grant through the Blueprint

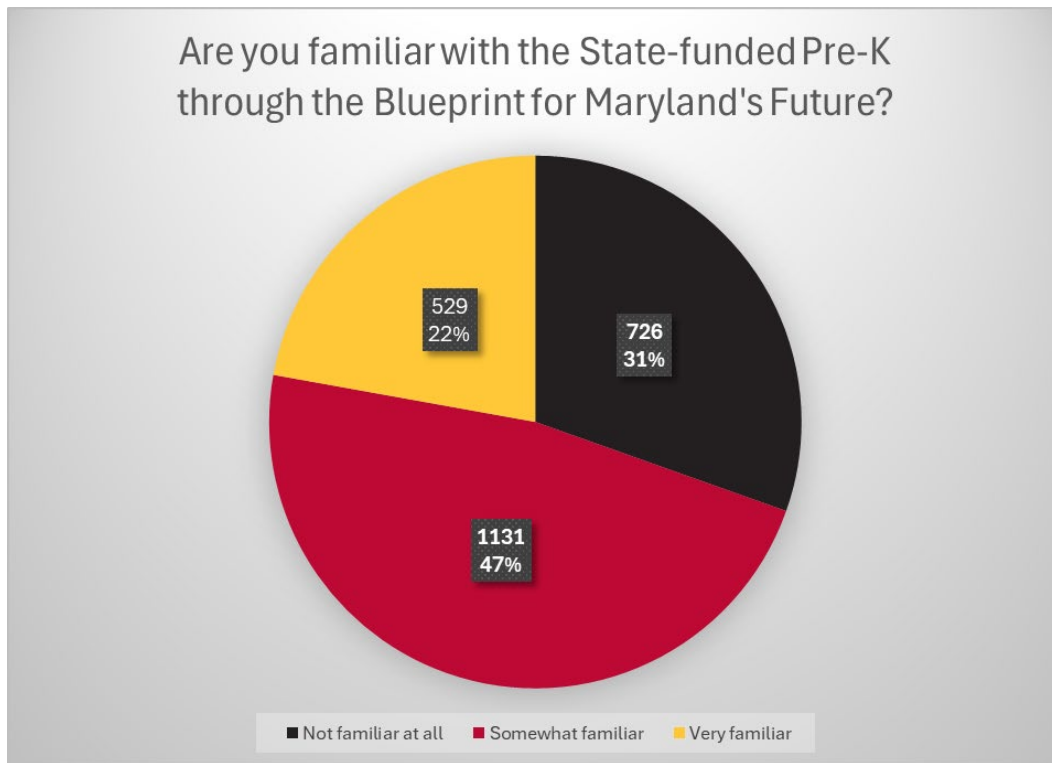


Figure 5 - Provider Participation in State-Funded Pre-K Grant Programs

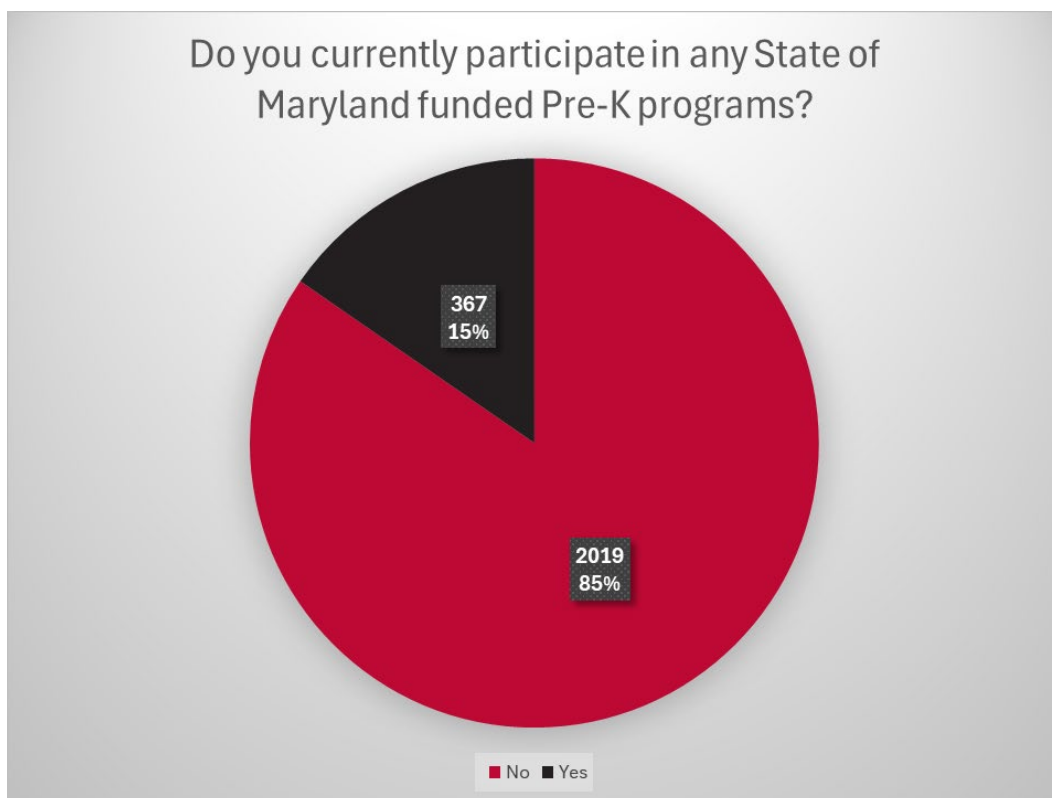


Figure 6 - Provider Participation by State-Funded Pre-K Grant Program

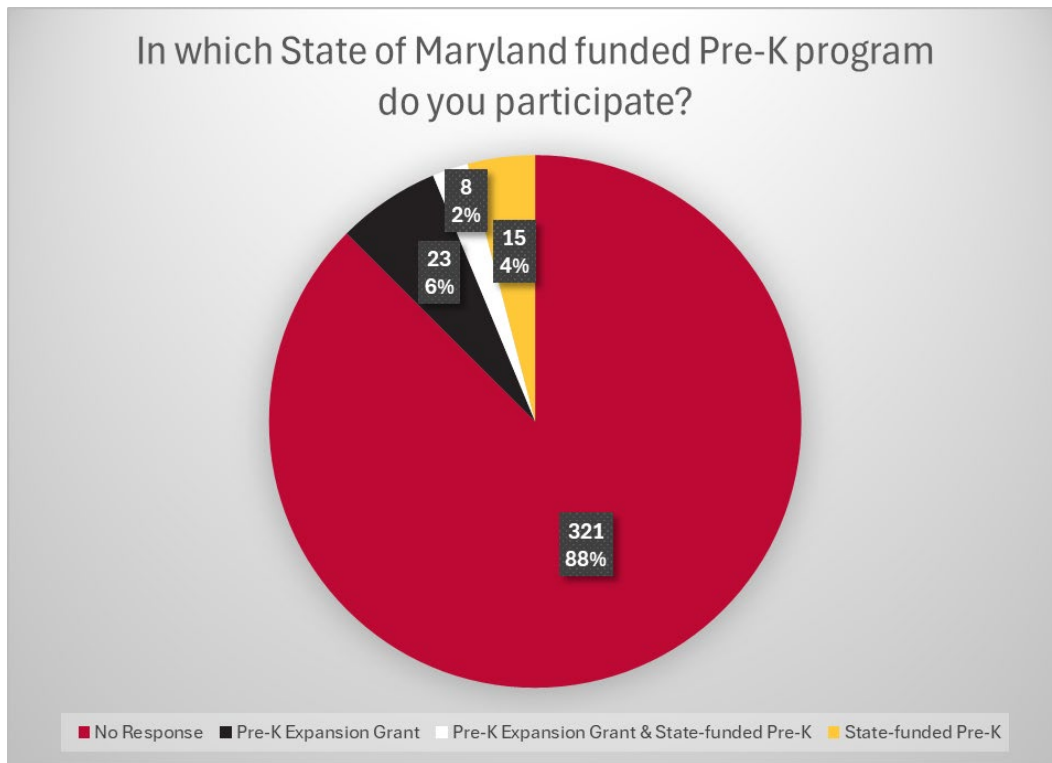


Figure 7 - Provider Interest in Learning More about Participating in State-Funded Pre-K Grants

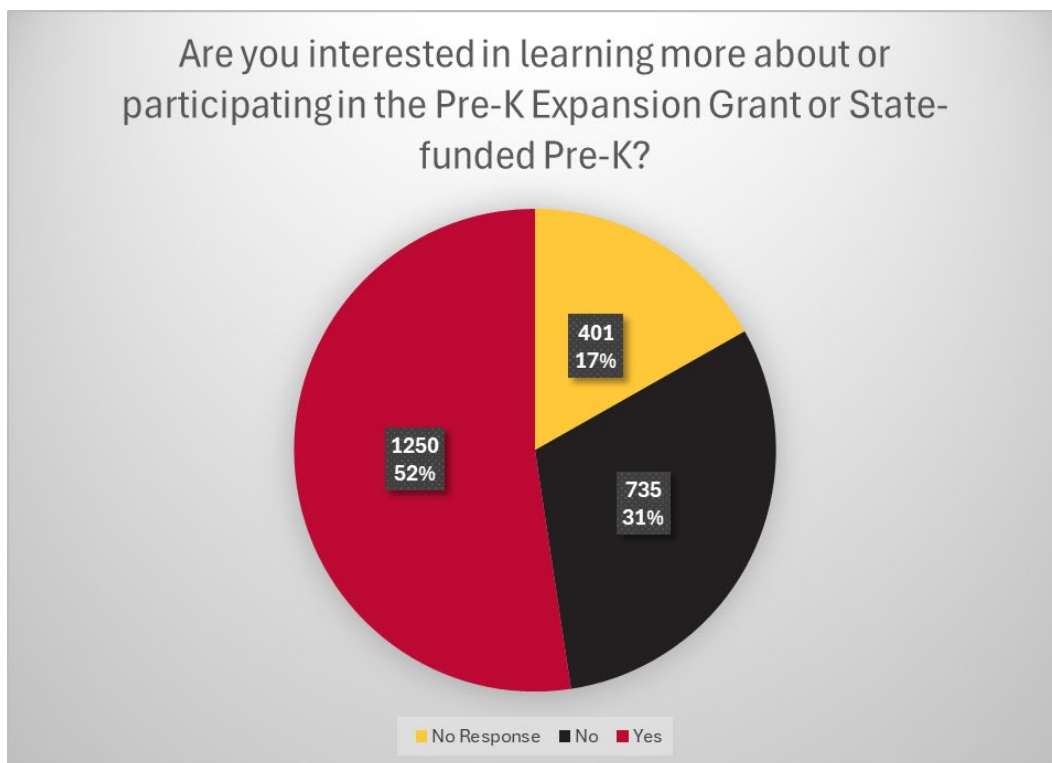
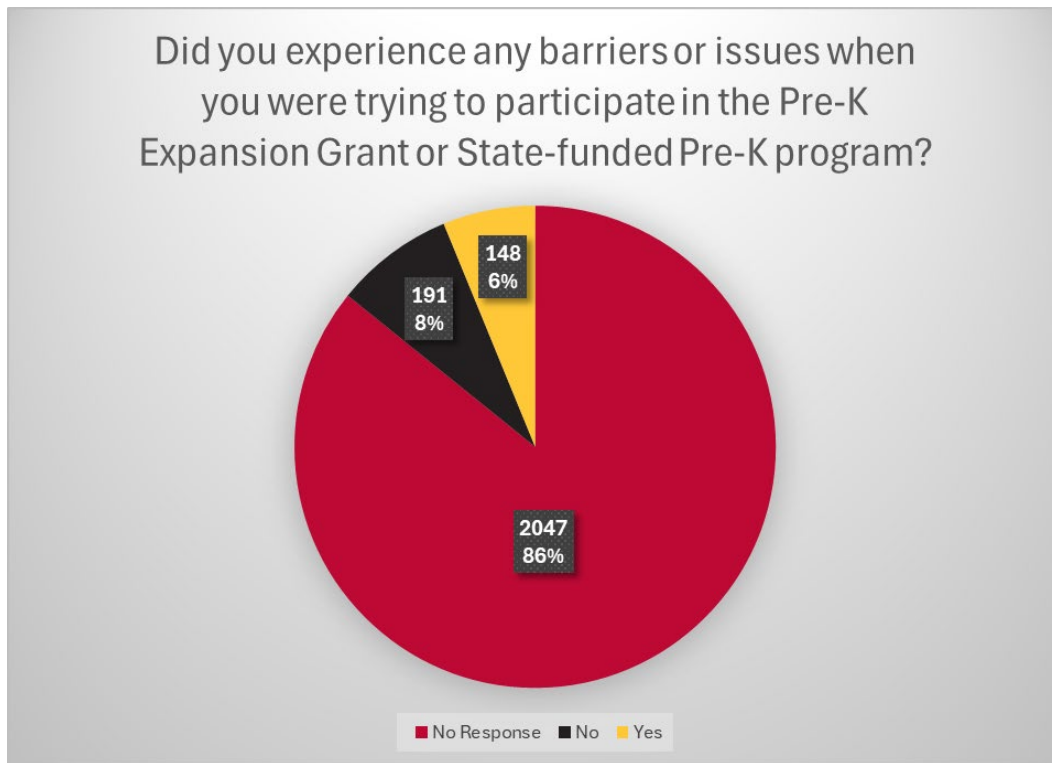


Figure 8 - Barriers or Issues when Trying to Participate in State-Funded Pre-K Grant Programs



RESULTS BY PROVIDER TYPE

Figures 9 to 14 and Tables 1A to 2B present the responses to the survey questions by provider type.

Figure 9 - Familiarity with Pre-K Expansion Grant by Provider Type

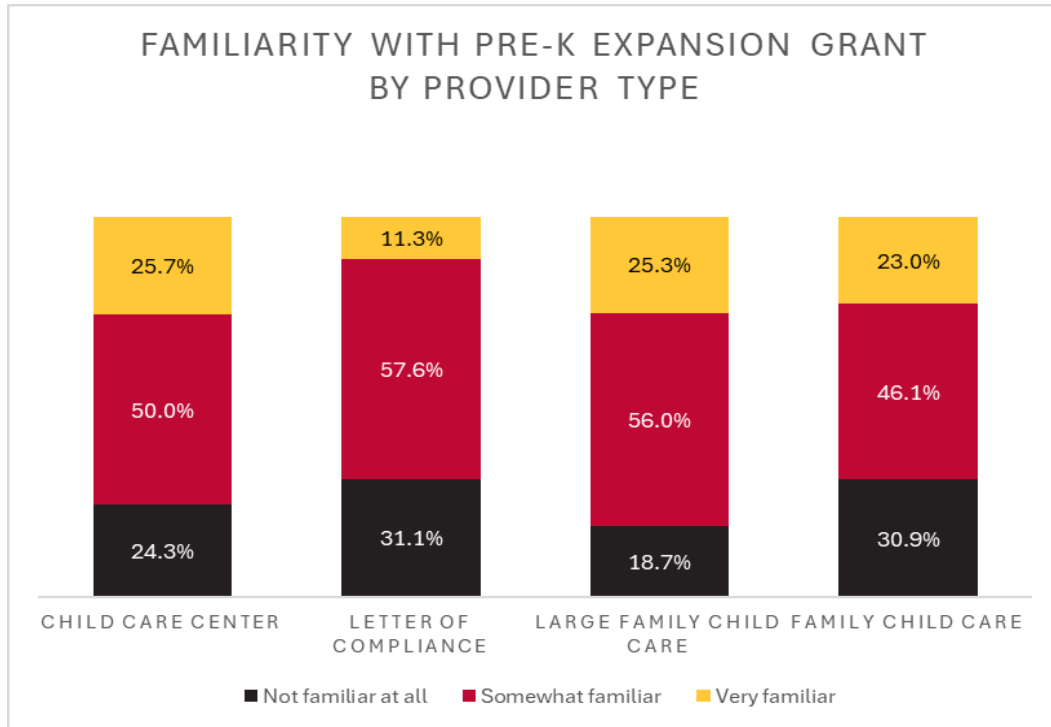


Figure 10 - Familiarity with State-Funded Pre-K by Provider Type

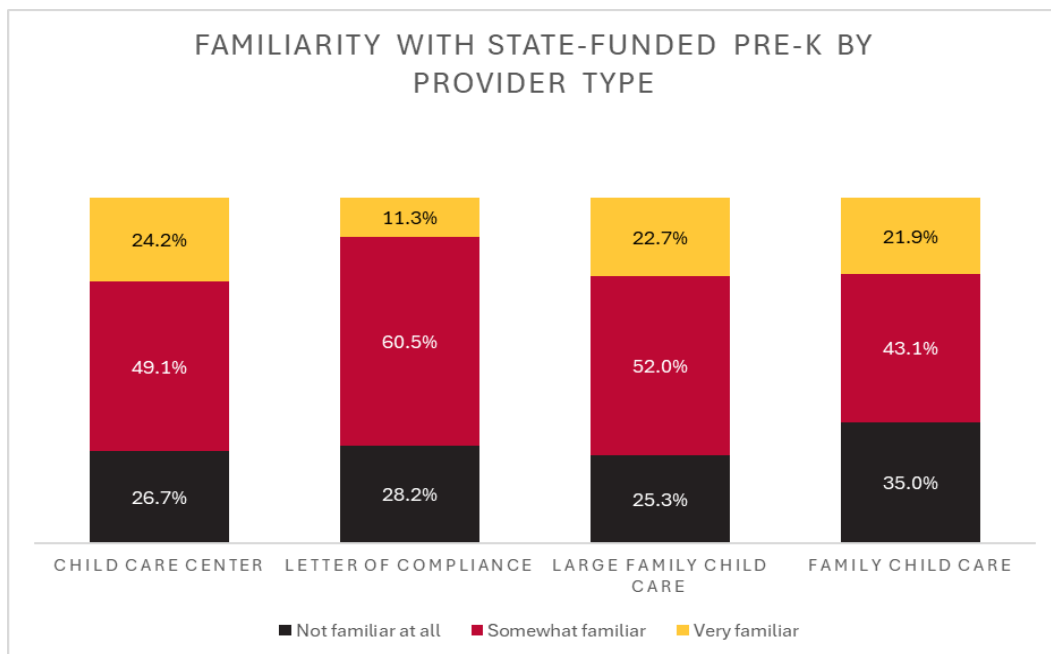


Figure 11 - Participation in State Funded Pre-K by Provider Type

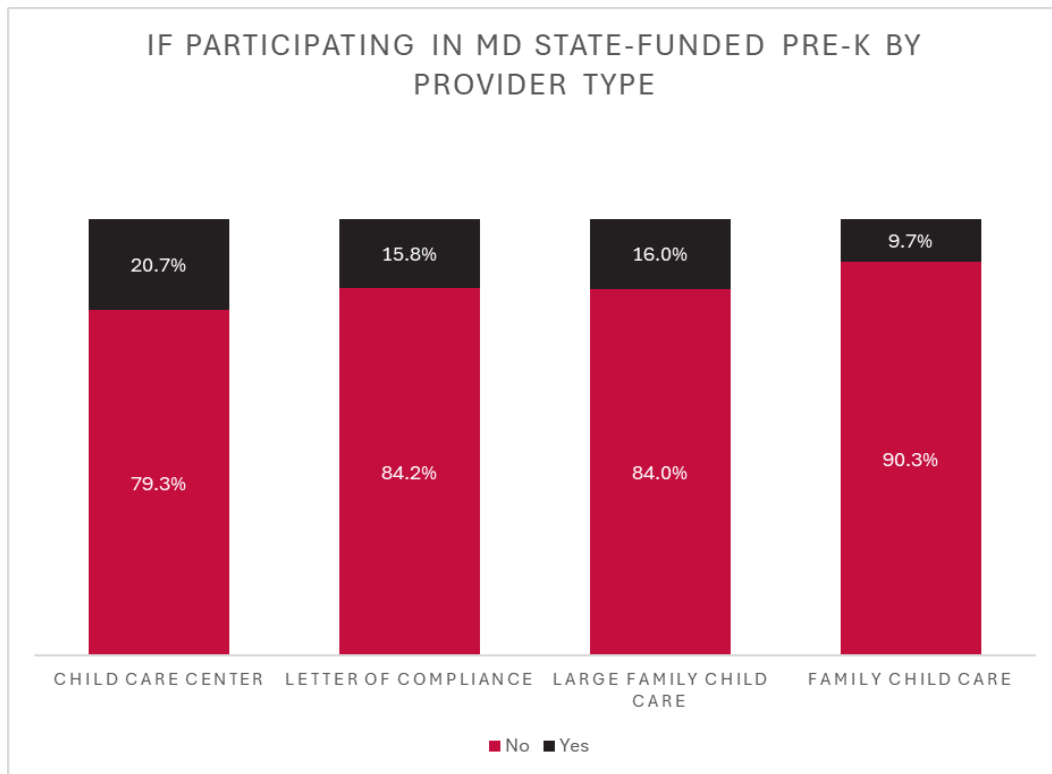


Figure 12 - Type of State-Funded Pre-K Grant Participation by Provider Type

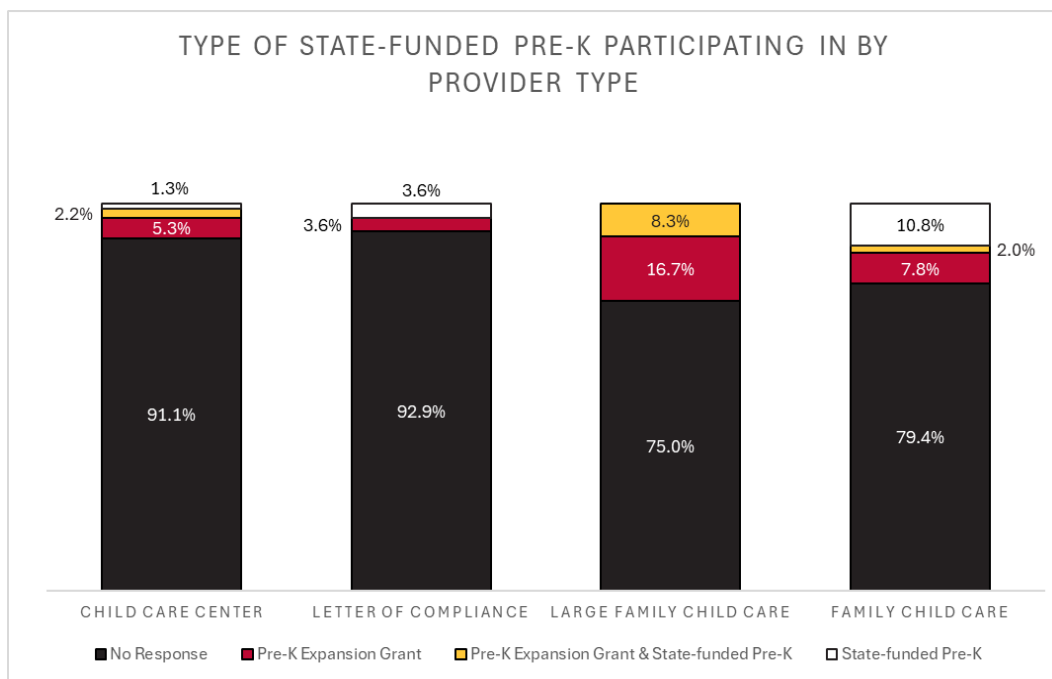


Figure 13 - Providers Interest in Learning More about State-Funded Pre-K Grant Programs

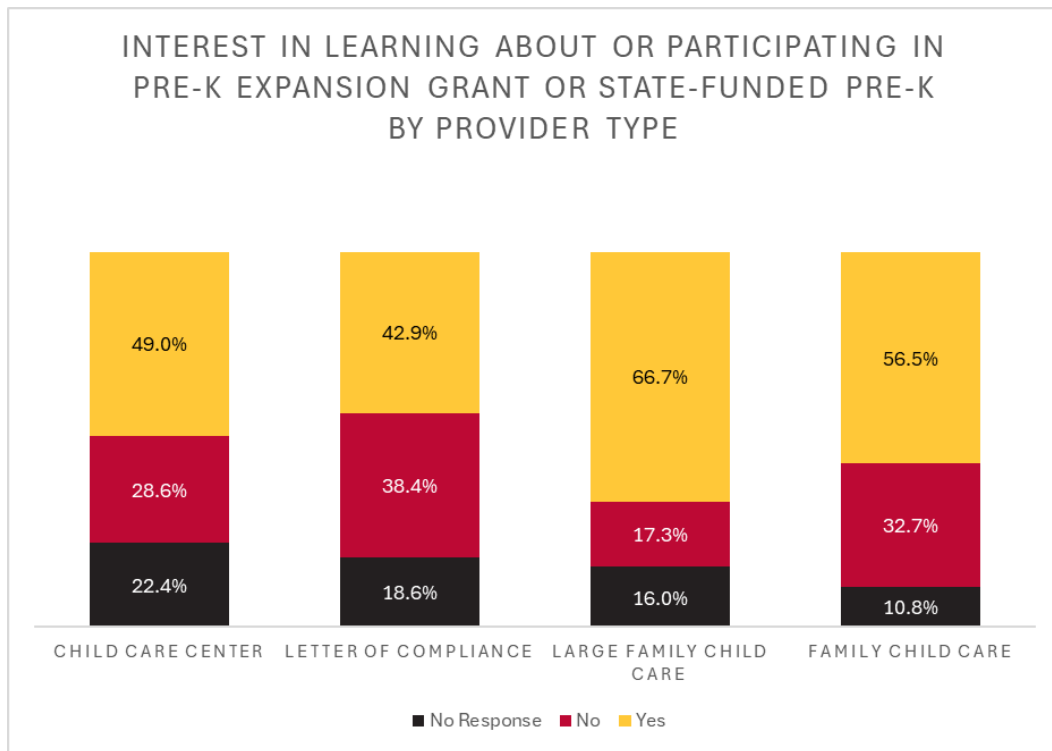


Figure 14 - Barriers or Issues when Trying to Participate in Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-Funded Pre-K by Provider Type

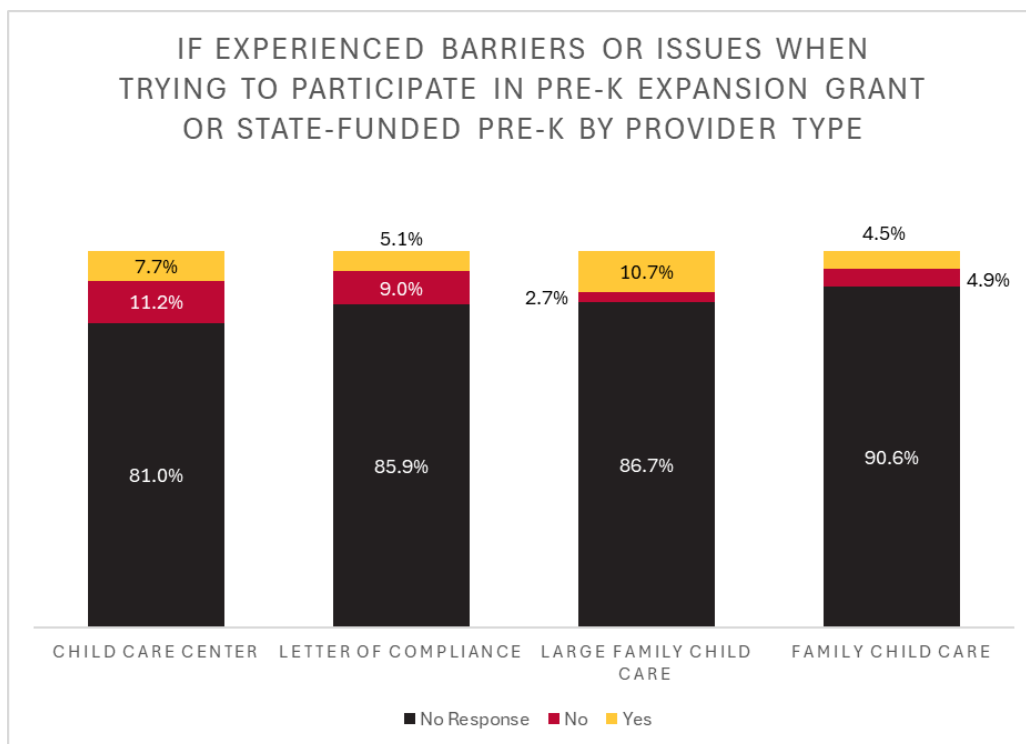


Table 1A - Type of Barriers Experienced by Respondents who Experienced Barriers or Issues when They Were Trying to Participate in the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K program

Barrier Experienced by Providers	Percent Within Provider Type				Barrier Experienced - All Provider Types	
	Child Care Center	LOC Facility	Large Family Child Care Home	Family Child Care Home	%	#
Lack of awareness or knowledge of Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K programs	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0
Not enough funding per-pupil (currently it is \$13,000 per pupil)	34.5%	11.1%	50.0%	29.8%	32.4%	48
Not enough eligible families	25.0%	55.6%	25.0%	34.0%	29.7%	44
Lack of transportation for families	15.5%	11.1%	25.0%	19.1%	16.9%	25
Not enough qualified staff	51.2%	22.2%	25.0%	34.0%	42.6%	63
Difficulty with grant writing	28.6%	11.1%	37.5%	40.4%	31.8%	47
Difficulty with invoicing	10.7%	0.0%	37.5%	25.5%	16.2%	24
Difficulty maintaining Maryland EXCELS level 3 or above	10.7%	0.0%	25.0%	17.0%	12.8%	19
Difficulty managing the administration of the grant	15.5%	0.0%	25.0%	25.5%	18.2%	27
Not enough information about how the grant works	28.6%	0.0%	37.5%	36.2%	29.7%	44
Not enough funding to adequately pay staff	34.5%	11.1%	25.0%	25.5%	29.7%	44
State Pre-K could create salary inequities among staff	31.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.8%	23.0%	34
Children on Child Care Scholarship have a higher per pupil rate	15.5%	0.0%	12.5%	6.4%	11.5%	17
Difficulty navigating various regulatory requirements for multiple streams	13.1%	0.0%	12.5%	21.3%	14.9%	22
Not enough funding and/or support to get higher credentials or degrees for myself or my staff	26.2%	11.1%	50.0%	23.4%	25.7%	38
Lack of communication between Local Education Agencies (or Public School Systems) and private child care providers	27.4%	0.0%	37.5%	40.4%	30.4%	45
Difficulty with the 6.5-hour day requirement	13.1%	33.3%	12.5%	21.3%	16.9%	25
Difficulty with the State preventing faith-based learning during the 6.5-hour day	7.1%	33.3%	12.5%	17.0%	12.2%	18
Other	14.3%	11.1%	37.5%	27.7%	19.6%	29
Respondents who experienced barriers or issues when they were trying to participate in the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K program	84	9	8	47		148

Table 1B - Barriers Experienced by Respondents who Recorded "Other" Barriers

Other Barriers Experienced	Provider Type				Total
	Child Care Center	LOC Facility	Large Family Child Care Home	Family Child Care Home	
Community or school officials do not look at this as a school. I would like to expand on this.	0	0	1	0	1
Competing with the MCPS full day Pre-K programs at all schools.	1	0	0	0	1
Constant coaching is not necessary. We all are educators and know how to teach our students.	0	0	0	1	1
Difficult to get needed substitute for training	0	0	0	1	1
Difficultly getting parents to understand that I am offering Pre-K through a partnership with MSDE. Not simply saying it to get their interest.	0	0	0	1	1
Difficulty recruiting parents due to almost 100% of Montgomery County Public Schools offering full day Pre-K. Families prefer to have their child in a school where their other children attend when the Pre-K is full day. We are competing with MCPS and their income eligibility amount is the same as Community based programs.	1	0	0	0	1
Difficulty recruiting students when MCPS is offering full day Pre-K at almost every public school in the county. Recruitment of eligible students is very difficult when we are competing with the Public Schools offering full day Pre-K and same income eligibility of 300%.	1	0	0	0	1
Enrolling my child	1	0	0	0	1
FCC providers need support including but not limited to help with grant management, curriculum implementation, coaching etc. A hub-like model like ASPIRE is helpful in that regard. Hubs need to be funded to reduce the administrative burden on already burdened providers.	0	0	0	1	1
I am with Aspire. It was too difficult to do on my own.	0	0	0	1	1
It seems as though I am always looked over.	0	0	0	1	1
Length of time to be informed if grant has been awarded.	1	0	0	0	1
On-time payments	0	0	0	1	1

It is my opinion (I am a 35+ yr veteran teacher) and the opinion of every teacher I encounter, that the specific state requirements for classroom environment and what/how content is taught, far exceeds what is necessary. Pre-K teachers have very little control over what they do. I am an exceptional teacher, and yet I still get frustrated with too many specifics required. When we are evaluated by the MSDE specialist, the expectation should be; are the students happy, safe, and is there evidence of learning. In my opinion, the specialist should NOT dictate to me how my classroom should be set up. Weather the Learning Centers are in the middle of the room or around the outside of the classroom should be of no consequence to the evaluator. Labels on a toy shelf with pictures is only purposeful to a Pre-K student when it is time to clean up and for examples of print. Why would I want to put both English and Spanish words on my labels? My ELL students will be learning to read English, not Spanish. Many things frankly do not make sense, is a way-to-way overreach, and puts extra burden and requirements on the Pre-K teachers. I believe Centers do not want to get involved because it is too much bureaucracy.	1	0	0	0	1
Mandate for fully certified teachers for Head Start and Child Care Centers. Public Schools are allowed conditional and provisions for Teachers that are not fully certified Nonpublic schools do not get that luxury.	1	0	0	0	1
Pre-K is based on a 10-month year, and we have 12 months of bills/mortgage or lease. When the program ends, we have to try to come up with students to replace the PreK expansion students who ended in June. 2. After completing the application, then getting the final decision late makes it difficult to hold spots for the Pre-k students. If you do not get approved, you would now have 20 or more spots unfilled which leaves your program at risk of not being financially viable. We need the application early, like January and the decision by February which aligns with our enrollment periods for the upcoming school year. Unlike the public schools, we will close if we do not have adequate students registered to pay the bills. In addition, we received the 15% early funds after the school year starts which means we are left to float the expenses of the Pre-K program - purchasing supplies, rent, paying teachers, etc. until we are paid the 15%. This is very difficult for many programs.	1	0	0	0	1

Receiving funding in timely manner	0	0	1	0	1
Requirement to get P3 cert (will complete this December) and now disallow P3 certification to qualify and switched to just degrees. P3 certification or degree should both be independent qualifiers.	0	0	0	1	1
Small growing center with a lot on the director's plate. I would love to participate!	1	0	0	0	1
The ASPIRE program I'm working with lost funding to pay their staff, and they were forced to take it from me.	0	0	0	1	1
The program keeps getting cuts in funding. We are expected to maintain a level of education and we no longer have credentialing to help pay for this. They reduced the amount we are to be paid for funded children. We are expected to have specific materials to support learning that we are not reimbursed for. I provide a high-quality program, but it is hard without help.	0	0	1	0	1
The timing of the grant is also challenging. We enroll children for the upcoming school year, and it is difficult to save spots for grant families when we do not receive notification about whether we received the grant until mid-June.	1	0	0	0	1
Those participating in Aspire program only receive 12000 per child because MSDE did not fund them properly. Also funding for education through credentialing was unfunded. That is ridiculous.	0	0	0	1	1
Too much requirements for provider and It is not something that benefits us economically since the payment is very little	0	0	0	1	1
We are current recipients of the grant for 3s and 4s. There seems to be competition with the LEA and the spots they need to fill. I only applied for 12 slots this year as I had that many kids internally that qualified. Also, the lateness of the NOGA and not have the MOU with the LEA is causing more barriers.	1	0	0	0	1
We do not have enough support for materials and training, and this year they have lowered the payment per child, which affects us even more. They do not pay the scholarship, which makes us make the decision to have fewer children with this program, since it is not something that helps us, but rather harms us at the end of the school year.	0	0	0	1	1
Respondents who experienced "Other" barriers	11	0	3	12	26

Table 2A - Barriers Influencing Providers' Decisions to Not Participate in the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K program

Barrier Influencing Decision by Providers to Not Participate	Percent Within Provider Type				Barrier Influencing Decision - All Provider Types	
	Child Care Center	LOC Facility	Large Family Child Care Home	Family Child Care Home	%	#
Lack of awareness or knowledge of Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K programs	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0
Not enough funding per-pupil (currently it is \$13,000 per pupil)	7.0%	2.7%	0.0%	3.9%	5.0%	101
Not enough eligible families	6.6%	10.1%	1.6%	6.8%	6.8%	137
Lack of transportation for families	3.7%	3.4%	0.0%	2.9%	3.2%	64
Not enough qualified staff	13.6%	10.1%	4.8%	8.1%	10.5%	212
Difficulty with grant writing	7.0%	5.4%	3.2%	8.4%	7.4%	149
Difficulty with invoicing	3.9%	2.0%	0.0%	3.8%	3.6%	73
Difficulty maintaining Maryland EXCELS level 3 or above	6.3%	8.1%	3.2%	7.8%	7.0%	142
Difficulty managing the administration of the grant	4.9%	5.4%	3.2%	4.9%	4.9%	98
Not enough information about how the grant works	5.0%	6.7%	3.2%	7.4%	6.2%	125
Not enough funding to adequately pay staff	8.9%	6.7%	3.2%	5.8%	7.1%	144
State Pre-K could create salary inequities among staff	9.1%	8.7%	1.6%	3.0%	5.9%	120
Children on Child Care Scholarship have a higher per pupil rate	2.1%	0.7%	1.6%	1.8%	1.8%	37
Difficulty navigating various regulatory requirements for multiple streams	5.3%	9.4%	4.8%	5.8%	5.8%	118
Not enough funding and/or support to get higher credentials or degrees for myself or my staff	8.5%	4.7%	3.2%	6.1%	6.9%	140
Lack of communication between Local Education Agencies (or Public School Systems) and private child care providers	5.5%	4.7%	0.0%	6.0%	5.5%	111
Difficulty with the 6.5-hour day requirement	5.8%	10.7%	3.2%	4.8%	5.6%	113
Difficulty with the State preventing faith-based learning during the 6.5-hour day	3.6%	20.8%	3.2%	3.3%	4.7%	95
Other	6.3%	7.4%	7.9%	10.1%	8.2%	166
Respondents not currently participating in any State of Maryland funded Pre-K programs	861	149	63	946		2019

Table 2B - Barriers Influencing the Participation of Respondents who Indicated "Other"
Participation Barriers

Other barriers influencing decisions to not participate	Provider Type				Total
	Child Care Center	LOC Facility	Large Family Child Care Home	Family Child Care Home	
5 day a week and state controlling how I teach	0	0	0	1	1
A BS degree in early education, I have an AAS in early childhood education	0	0	0	1	1
Age range make it impossible	0	0	0	1	1
All children already attend Pre-K at the public school	0	0	0	1	1
All the above	0	0	0	1	1
Already like where I am working	1	0	0	0	1
Asking for teacher certification that I don't have it. I will not go to college for 4 years to get certified.	0	0	0	1	1
Below	0	0	0	1	1
Children are too young	0	0	0	1	1
Close to retirement	0	0	0	1	1
Compromise our mission statement	0	1	0	0	1
Connected to a Private school	1	0	0	0	1
Currently in a compliance agreement.	0	1	0	0	1
Didn't qualify this year	1	0	0	0	1
Difficult to achieve 180 days	1	0	0	0	1
Difficulty getting paid by scholarship!	0	0	0	1	1
Difficulty providing Pre-K with such a mixed age group of children	0	0	0	1	1
Do not understand some of these barriers	1	0	0	0	1
Do not want to beg to be paid or spend hours on the phone asking for payments	0	0	0	1	1
Don't know enough. We are a co-op and operate differently.	1	0	0	0	1
Don't want state to have say in my curriculum / Reggio based	1	0	0	0	1
Due to our location, we provide early learning to out-of-state children as well. We have a higher enrollment for out of state children than for those residing in Maryland.	1	0	0	0	1
Facility space	0	1	0	0	1
Family child care age range	0	0	0	1	1

Family providers have various age groups, limiting the younger ones when 6.5hrs per day required. learning through play. why the BS degree, are the children learning algebra? or the higher maths? social emotional and life skills are needed.	0	0	0	1	1
Getting out of daycare	0	0	0	1	1
Having different age grouped children	0	0	1	0	1
Having trouble getting kids haven't been open.	0	0	0	1	1
Help qualified persons the ability to be a part of the program	1	0	0	0	1
I already am already adding preschool learning in my program. I am already a qualified preschool teacher. I like to be at home instead of a school.	0	0	0	1	1
I already work an extremely long day and it is already mentally and physically demanding. I already have my own preschool curriculum. I do not see any benefit to me by switching.	0	0	0	1	1
I am a Montessori program and want to enroll families interested in Montessori, not someone simply looking for child care.	0	0	1	0	1
I am an informal child care provider.	0	0	0	1	1
I am not credentialed or on Md Excels	0	0	0	1	1
I am not the director of the center	1	0	0	0	1
I am uninterested in the county/state/MSDE pushing things down my throat that never work, are not worth my time and unrealistic. Let providers run their businesses the way they choose and let kids be kids!	0	0	0	1	1
I don't have a bachelor's degree and can't afford someone with it and I don't have a CDA certification at this time.	0	0	0	1	1
I don't make that decision	1	0	0	0	1
I have a problem with 3 and 4 yr olds being in a school setting	0	0	0	1	1
I have not learned anything about this program	0	0	0	1	1
I honestly don't have any interest in doing this program. I have no interest in getting a bachelor's degree and I also feel that MSDE asks enough out of us providers. We don't have the time to do more stuff!!!!	0	0	0	1	1
I was told that they would hire more teachers if needed.	0	0	0	1	1
I will be applying for the Aspire program next school year. Hopefully their funding is fully reinstated	0	0	0	1	1
I work for a federally funded program already	1	0	0	0	1
I'm not sure - I can ask my employer	1	0	0	0	1
If it's a grant, I don't have to pay it back, I shouldn't have to claim it on my taxes.	0	0	0	1	1

Incompatible with a cooperative preschool model	1	0	0	0	1
Irrelevant to my situation	0	0	0	1	1
It takes a long time to get a teacher's certification and still work full-time as a family child care provider. Early childhood educators such as family child care providers should at least be eligible for this grant and receive all of the benefits and funding while in school to become a license teacher. We should be given a time period to become licensed since we already have the experience with children and teaching them already. This grant would elevate all family child care programs to higher quality regardless of current teacher license. The program needs to be accessible to those with experience operating a daycare and willing to earn the credentials.	0	0	0	1	1
It was told to me that I had to have my degree.	0	0	0	1	1
Just not interested.	0	0	0	1	1
Lack of additional space in my facility	1	0	0	0	1
Lack of state resources to support special needs.	0	1	0	0	1
Lack of support for children with special needs	1	0	0	0	1
Lack of trust and transparency with CCS/MSDE.	0	0	0	1	1
Many of these questions indicate a bent towards CCS. I will never participate in CCS.	0	0	0	1	1
Mixed age group	0	0	0	1	1
Montessori and Nature-Based curriculum not accepted and I can't operate 4 days.	0	0	0	1	1
Montessori school should be granted exemption from Excel certification	1	0	0	0	1
Montessori Teachers are not recognized by the State as Teachers even though they are highly qualified for their jobs.	1	0	0	0	1
Montessori validated preschools are not automatically qualified	1	0	0	0	1
MSDE is not trustworthy with Scholarships, I wouldn't dare depend on it to pay Pre-K	0	0	0	1	1
My child is going into kindergarten	0	0	0	1	1
No degree	0	0	0	1	1
No empty rooms for program.	1	0	0	0	1
No extra space in our facility	1	0	0	0	1
No interest	0	0	0	9	9
Not enough information	0	0	0	1	1
Not enough classrooms overcrowding curriculum that's not developmentally appropriate.	1	0	0	0	1
Not enough room for a separate space	0	0	0	1	1

Not enough time, funds, mental health	0	0	0	1	1
Not familiar	0	0	0	1	1
Not for profit facility	1	0	0	0	1
Not in EXCELS	0	0	0	1	1
Not interested in any more school at this point in my life	0	0	0	1	1
Not interested in pursuing the degree necessary. Funny, a few years ago we were led to believe that experience and quality initiatives would qualify us.	0	0	0	1	1
Not main teacher in Pre-K	0	0	0	1	1
Not my school.	1	0	0	0	1
Not something I can do from my position as a teacher	0	1	0	0	1
Not very familiar	1	0	0	0	1
Only want it through aspire	0	0	0	1	1
Retiring	1	0	0	0	1
Ridiculous state regulations and Paperwork!!!!	1	0	0	0	1
Salary not covered for teacher in grant.	1	0	0	0	1
School Based Only Program	1	0	0	0	1
Short staff	0	0	0	1	1
Small family daycare	0	0	0	1	1
Space	1	0	0	0	1
Stop pushing children to be in school all day at a young age.	0	0	0	1	1
Teaching degree that was begun was not able to complete due to college requirement of student teaching in public schools while also abiding by MSDE's rules of keeping my child care open in order to hold on to my state family child care license (CCCPDF grant requirement).	0	0	0	1	1
The entire grant is very confusing	1	0	0	0	1
The mandatory Creative Curriculum is not suitable for family child care.	0	0	0	1	1
The money that would be needed to market your program.	0	0	0	1	1
The pilot program of the Pre-K program by Aspire refuses to include me in the program so how else do I be included in the program.	0	0	0	1	1
The requirement are too much for child care providers and the days are very long	0	0	0	1	1
The Scholarship managed by MSDE is a nightmare to deal with so I can only image how this is going to play out. MSDE has never asked providers for their input until now when they see it is not working. The Pre-K children in my programs needs are being met in a	1	0	0	0	1

location they are familiar with, they do not belong in the public schools.					
The state has failed to succeed in education with K-12. Not interested in their input into a quality program that outperforms their outcomes with significantly less effort than they require now.	0	1	0	0	1
The way the state pays	0	0	0	1	1
To get a teaching certificate it would require multiple trips over the bridge for education. I currently have a BA in child development. I do not want to go back to school. I also do not have the space for a separate Pre-K room in my home-based program.	0	0	0	1	1
Too much work	1	0	0	0	1
Too much for 1 person to deal with. I'm only one person	0	0	0	1	1
Trying to expand a program that is lacking purpose.	1	0	0	0	1
We are a cooperative preschool so I do not think our model would be eligible	1	0	0	0	1
We are a school not a daycare center, but we have to fall under the child care regulations.	1	0	0	0	1
We got denied due to "missing paperwork" but when we asked for clarification, we simply got the same generic email in return.	1	0	0	0	1
We offer a high quality educational experience that is also rewarding for teachers. Changing to that system would make teaching more onerous because it will come with far more regulation and less freedom.	0	1	0	0	1
We are a private school EC-8th Grade	1	0	0	0	1
We're not interested in the current Pre-K standards.	1	0	0	0	1
Respondents who indicated other barriers influencing their decision to not participate	39	7	2	68	116

Note: Four comments not related to the Pre-K were removed.

Summary of Results

Among the 2,386 child care personnel who responded to the survey, Child Care Centers (45.5%) and Family Child Care Homes (43.9%) had similar representation (Figure 1). The majority (72.5%) of respondents expressed familiarity with the Pre-K Expansion Grant through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future: 49% were somewhat familiar while 23.4% were very familiar (Figure 3). Slightly less (69.6%) of the respondents were either somewhat familiar (47.4%) or very familiar (22.2%) with the State-funded Pre-K through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Figure 4). However, only a small percentage (15.4%) participate in any State of Maryland funded Pre-K programs (Figure 5) and only 12.5% of them indicated which State of Maryland funded Pre-K programs they participate (Figure 6).

Slightly more than half (52%) of respondents indicated that they are interested in learning more about or participating in the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K, but approximately 31% expressed no interest in doing so (Figure 7). However, among those respondents, 47.4% were Family Child Care providers while 42.6% were Child Care Centers.

Approximately 14% of respondents answered the question about barriers or issues when trying to participate in the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K program. They comprise 8% who did not experience any barriers and 6.2% (148) who experienced barriers (Figure 8). The majority of those indicating they experienced barriers were Child Care Centers and they represented 24.8% of those who answered the question.

The 148 providers who experienced barriers comprised 84 (56.8%) Child Care Centers, 9 (6.1%) LOCs, 8 (5.4%) Large Family Child Care Homes, and 47 (31.8%) Family Child Care Homes. None of these providers chose "Lack of awareness or knowledge of Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K programs" as a barrier to one of the Pre-K programs. However, the top five barriers cited by Child Care Center providers were "Not enough qualified staff" (51.2% of Child Care Providers), "Not enough funding per-pupil (currently it is \$13,000 per pupil)" (34.5%), "Not enough funding to adequately pay staff" (34.5%), "State Pre-K could create salary inequities among staff" (31%), and "Difficulty with grant writing" (28.6%). Meanwhile, the top five barriers cited by Family Child Care providers were "Difficulty with grant writing" (40.4%), "Lack of communication between Local Education Agencies (or Public School Systems) and private child care providers" (40.4%), "Not enough information about how the grant works" (36.2%), "Not enough eligible families" (34%), and "Not enough qualified staff" (34%). Though LOCs and Large Family Child Care providers experienced barriers, their low numbers preclude the presenting of significant findings. These results are presented in Table 1a. Additionally, some providers recorded "Other" barriers which are recorded in Table 1b and are too varied to summarize.

Of the 2019 respondents who indicated that they do not currently participate in any State of Maryland funded Pre-K programs, only 587 (29.1%) answered the question about barriers influencing their decision to not participate. The most cited barrier influencing Child Care Center providers was "Not enough qualified staff" (13.6%). LOCs cited "Difficulty with the State preventing faith-based learning during the 6.5-hour day" (20.8%) as the top barrier influencing their decision to not participate. However, Family Child Care and Large Family Child Care providers mostly cited "Other" barriers (10.1% and 7.9% respectively) as influencing their decision to not participate, and the reasons that they submitted are almost as varied as the number of respondents presenting them. These results are presented in Tables 2a and 2b.

Barriers and Next Steps

The survey was conducted to explore the barriers faced by child care programs participating in state Pre-K programs. The results have identified several significant challenges that include insufficient funding, complex regulatory requirements, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. These barriers, as identified through the survey, are hindering many programs from fully engaging in Pre-K initiatives. Understanding these challenges and barriers faced by child care programs is essential for developing effective strategies to increase participation.

There are some barriers that MSDE is still developing solutions for, but MSDE is engaged in regular conversations with stakeholders and regularly conducts an internal review of systems and processes to ensure continuous quality improvement. Also, MSDE is strategically engaging with private providers to provide accurate information about prekindergarten grant opportunities.

Table 3 – Barriers and Next Steps to Address the Barriers

Barrier	Next Steps
Difficulty maintaining Maryland EXCELS level 3 or above	The Quality Improvement Initiatives Branch provides resources as well as individualized technical assistance to programs that want to increase their quality rating in MD EXCELS. This Technical Assistance is provided by Quality Assurance Specialists who provide a variety of levels of support both in person and virtually. A variety of online resources are always available, including the Maryland EXCELS Toolkit , which guides programs through each level, offering specific guidance for developing policies and procedures based on program type. The Maryland EXCELS website provides a long list of tutorials that support successful participation in Maryland EXCELS and system navigation. The Quality Assurance Specialist also provides Maryland EXCELS training that is specific to the standards and supports increased ratings. This training is offered monthly and is free. MSDE will continue to share these resources with the child care community.
Not enough funding to support staff with obtaining higher qualifications	The Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) is a tuition assistance program for child care providers to obtain a college education at participating colleges/universities in Maryland. This funding will be made available for child care providers to earn a college degree in education or a related field. Also, teacher assistants in publicly funded

	prekindergarten can document five years of experience to be exempt from the Child Development Associate credential requirement. In addition, MSDE and Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) are in the process of developing a private provider career ladder pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-1A-08. The private provider career ladder will align with licensing staff qualifications and child care credentialing. It will also include credit for prior learning and experience. In the winter 2025, MSDE will roll out free professional learning opportunities and an e-community, for private and public providers.
More funding per pupil is needed (currently \$13,000 per pupil)	A cost of care feasibility study for child care will be released in the fall of 2024 to develop cost modelling for sustainability of private provider Pre-K programs. Additionally in FY 29, Maryland will reach the full cost of care for Pre-K as determined by the Blueprint.
More information for private providers about the Pre-K Expansion Grant and the Blueprint formula funding Grant	MSDE will continue offering and promoting the PUSH to Pre-K Initiative and host additional technical assistance sessions to explain how to access the Pre-K grants. MSDE will also identify dedicated staff to support outreach efforts.
Difficulty navigating various regulatory requirements for multiple streams	MSDE is currently reviewing its systems and requirements across various programs and funding streams to identify areas where adjustments can be made for greater clarity and usability. For instance, in collaboration with the Maryland Higher Education Commission and key stakeholders, MSDE will develop a career ladder for Pre-K. This ladder will be aligned with licensing staff qualifications and the credentialing program, ensuring a clear and cohesive path for early childhood professionals.
Better communication between local education agencies and private child care providers	MSDE facilitates a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that fosters collaboration and communication between LEAs and private providers. MSDE will continue to provide technical assistance to LEAs to assist with engaging private providers in their local area about the Pre-K grant opportunities. A list of all

	private providers is posted on the MSDE website. Private Providers will participate in joint Early Childhood Collaborative meetings to share information and identify opportunities to improve coordination and collaboration.
Difficulty with the 6.5-hour day requirement	The 6.5-hour day requirement is in statute. MSDE will provide technical assistance to programs to help plan a 6.5-hour schedule that is developmentally appropriate and meets the grant requirement.
Difficulty with the State preventing faith-based learning during the 6.5-hour day	The statute addresses explicit religious activities and states that an eligible Pre-K provider may not engage in explicitly religious activities during school hours. If an eligible provider engages in an explicitly religious activity, the activity shall be separate in time and location from any instruction offered and voluntary. MSDE will provide technical assistance to faith-based programs to develop and/or make schedule adjustments that meet the requirements of the Blueprint.
Difficulties receiving scholarship and other payments from MSDE and therefore apprehensive about having to rely on MSDE for other payments.	MSDE is continually reviewing its systems and processes for the various programs, including the Child Care Scholarship Program, administered by Division of Early Childhood (DEC). The Division has already made improvements to the Child Care Provider Portal and the Family Portal to support faster payments and clearer invoices. In addition, DEC is working on shortening the True-Up from 90 days to 30 days.
Difficulty with managing the administration of the grants for private provider programs	MSDE assigns Pre-K Support Specialists to each grantee to provide individualized technical assistance with managing the grant and meeting the deliverables. Additionally, multiple technical assistance sessions and open office hours for grantees are provided each grant year. MSDE will offer additional technical assistance sessions for added support and continue providing individualized support to grantees, as well as consult with providers to determine concrete situation for enhanced support.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey revealed critical barriers that child care programs face in participating in state Pre-K programs, including funding constraints, regulatory concerns, and staffing challenges. These obstacles must be addressed to enable broader participation and to ensure that all children have access to high-quality prekindergarten. Next steps include additional resources to support child care programs in meeting Pre-K standards and requirements; internal reviews of policies and processes to streamline regulatory requirements to reduce the burden on child care providers making participation easier; increase training and professional development opportunities to help child care providers attract and retain qualified staff; foster partnerships between LEAs, community organizations, and child care providers to create a supportive network that facilitates participation in Pre-K programs; and continue to gather feedback from child care providers and regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies, ensuring that the solutions remain responsive to the needs of the programs. By taking these steps, MSDE can work towards overcoming the barriers identified, increase participation, and expand access to high quality prekindergarten throughout the state.

Appendix

APPENDIX ONE: SURVEY DISTRIBUTED TO PROVIDERS IN QUALTRICS



As part of ongoing efforts to expand high quality prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs across Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Commerce are seeking to understand the perspectives and experiences of child care providers like you. Specifically, the goal is to identify the reasons why some providers may not be interested in participating in Pre-K expansion initiatives.

Your feedback is crucial in helping to identify and address the barriers hindering participation. By understanding these challenges, we can work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for all child care providers, ultimately ensuring the success of Maryland's Pre-K expansion efforts.

Maryland provides funding to local education agencies and private providers to offer Pre-K for children and their families. Are you familiar with the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?

	Not familiar at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar
Pre-K Expansion	☐	☐	☐
State-funded Pre-K	☐	☐	☐

What county is this facility located?

▼

What kind of child care program are you?

Family Child Care

Large Family Child Care

Child Care Center

Letter of Compliance-Child Care

Head Start Program

Faith-Based Child Care Program

Do you currently participate in any State of Maryland funded Pre-K programs?

Yes

No





Are you interested in learning more about or participating in the Pre-K Expansion Grant or State-funded Pre-K?

Yes

No





Do any of these barriers or issues influence your decision to not participate? (check all that apply)

Not enough funding per-pupil (currently it is \$13,000 per pupil)

Not enough eligible families

Lack of transportation for families

Not enough qualified staff

Difficulty with grant writing

Difficulty with invoicing

Difficulty maintaining Maryland EXCELS level 3 or above

Difficulty managing the administration of the grant

Not enough information about how the grant works

Not enough funding to adequately pay staff

State Pre-K could create salary inequities among staff

Children on Child Care Scholarship have a higher per pupil rate

Difficulty navigating various regulatory requirements for multiple streams

Not enough funding and/or support to get higher credentials or degrees for myself or my staff

Lack of communication between Local Education Agencies (or Public School Systems) and private child care providers

Difficulty with the 6.5-hour day requirement

Difficulty with the State preventing faith-based learning during the 6.5-hour day

Other

If you do not choose to participate in State of Maryland funded Pre-K programs, please explain why.



APPENDIX TWO: FIRST SURVEY EMAIL TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

From: MSDE Division of Early Childhood <MDEarlyChildhood@public.govdelivery.com>

Subject: We Need Your Input on Maryland's Pre-K Programs

July 31, 2024[View as a webpage](#)



Division of Early Childhood

Dear Early Care and Education Professional,

We need your help expanding access to high quality prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs in Maryland. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Commerce want to know why some child care providers might not be interested in joining Pre-K expansion efforts. Your feedback is very important to us. By sharing your thoughts, you can help us understand and fix the problems that might be stopping early care and education programs from participating. Please fill out the Pre-K survey by 5:00 PM on August 18th. The survey is short and takes less than 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will help us improve early childhood education in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and dedication to helping children learn and grow.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nakeisha Savage
Director of Early Learning and Instruction

[Complete the Survey](#)

APPENDIX THREE: SURVEY DETAILS PUBLISHED IN THE TUESDAY TIDBITS CHILD CARE PROVIDER NEWSLETTER

From: MSDE Division of Early Childhood <MDEarlyChildhood@public.govdelivery.com>

Subject: Share Feedback: Pre-K Survey and Credential Program Focus Group

August 6, 2024

[View as a webpage](#)



Division of Early Childhood

TUESDAY TIDBITS

Maryland Pre-K Program Survey: We Need Your Input!

We need your help expanding access to high-quality prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs in Maryland. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Commerce want to know why some child care providers might not be interested in joining Pre-K expansion efforts. Your feedback is very important to us. By sharing your thoughts, you can help us understand and fix the problems that might be stopping early care and education programs from participating.

Please fill out the Pre-K survey by 5:00 PM on **August 18th**. The survey is short and takes less than 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will help us improve early childhood education in Maryland. Thank you for your time and dedication to helping children learn and grow.

[Take the survey](#)

APPENDIX FOUR: SECOND SURVEY EMAIL TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

From: MSDE Division of Early Childhood <MDEarlyChildhood@public.govdelivery.com>

Subject: We Need Your Input on Maryland's Pre-K Programs

August 8, 2024[View as a webpage](#)



Division of Early Childhood

Dear Early Care and Education Professional,

We need your help expanding access to high quality prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs in Maryland. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Commerce want to know why some child care providers might not be interested in joining Pre-K expansion efforts. Your feedback is very important to us. By sharing your thoughts, you can help us understand and fix the problems that might be stopping early care and education programs from participating. Please fill out the Pre-K survey by 5:00 PM on August 18th. The survey is short and takes less than 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will help us improve early childhood education in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and dedication to helping children learn and grow.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nakeisha Savage
Director of Early Learning and Instruction

[Complete the Survey](#)

APPENDIX FIVE: THIRD SURVEY EMAIL TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

From: MSDE Division of Early Childhood <MDEarlyChildhood@public.govdelivery.com>

Subject: Last Call: We Need Your Input on Maryland's Pre-K Programs

August 14, 2024

[View as a webpage](#)



Division of Early Childhood

Dear Early Care and Education Professional,

We need your help expanding access to high quality prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs in Maryland. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Commerce want to know why some child care providers might not be interested in joining Pre-K expansion efforts. Your feedback is very important to us. By sharing your thoughts, you can help us understand and fix the problems that might be stopping early care and education programs from participating. Please fill out the Pre-K survey by 5:00 PM on August 18th. The survey is short and takes less than 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will help us improve early childhood education in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and dedication to helping children learn and grow.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nakeisha Savage
Director of Early Learning and Instruction

[Complete the Survey](#)