

Credential recognition for Montessori training

Nine states offer a pathway, with six more in the pipeline



BY **DENISE MONNIER**

A bill to support teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers in the state of Maryland has been approved in the legislature and is expected to be signed into law. The bill will create a pathway to licensure for Montessori teachers with bachelor's degrees in any field who hold credentials issued by MACTE accredited programs, or by AMI or AMS.

The Maryland bill is a great example of the persistence it can take to get these policy changes over the finish line for our Montessori communities. This is the third time this legislation has been proposed in the state. The first time it did not make it out of committee and was opposed by the Maryland Teacher's Union. The second time the COVID crisis closed the legislature and the bill died after having passed the senate and being heard in committee in the house. Third time for the win! Montessori Schools of Maryland has been working closely with the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI), Maryland House Delegate Julian Ivey, and Maryland Senator Will Smith to assess the best path to passing this bill for Maryland Montessori schools.

The Maryland project is part of an MPPI initiative of intensive work on passing these types of Montessori credential pathways to state teacher

licensure that has been funded by a grant from the Trust for Learning. The project spans two years and involves seven states at this point, with each state at a different phase of the work.

Colorado and Texas are at the beginning of this work, creating models for building coalitions to cultivate relationships both within their Montessori communities and with state legislators and policy makers, as well as potential stakeholders such as teacher unions. They are researching existing licensure pathways and looking for potential opportunities for Montessori credential holders to be included.

Pennsylvania and Illinois are deep into the work but have not been able to bring about policy reform yet. These states have established coalitions, and have a clear understanding of the existing licensure pathways in their state as well as challenges to their requests for a Montessori pathway. They also have established relationships with legislators and have legislative language prepared. These states are still in the process of garnering support and addressing concerns of potential opposition but are persisting.

Michigan, and Virginia are close to having pathways to state teacher licensure established. As in Maryland, advocates have persisted for years to keep legislative proposals alive and to build support for legislation. Here is a breakdown of work in the other 6 states:

Colorado: Our MPPI Advocacy lead in Colorado has been hard at work for the last year negotiating an increase in the number of hours of college credit that Montessori credentialed teachers are given towards their child care director credentials. The number will

hopefully be officially increased soon, and that increase will lay the groundwork for a pathway to state teacher licensure. Relationships are being cultivated with the various state offices involved and a request will be made soon.

Texas: Advocacy leads in Texas have been building a coalition of advocates to share the work as several policy issues are being approached for the state. The pathway to state teacher licensure is the focal point of the work that is beginning for Texas.

Pennsylvania: Here, the work has been ongoing for a few years. Considerable work has been done, including submission of a crosswalk to the Pennsylvania learning standards and multiple public testimony events. Transitions in state government and roadblocks in terms of administrative requirements for teacher preparation have been challenging, but our advocates have persevered, and are exploring multiple avenues to keep all of the options open as more executive and legislative transitions are expected.

Illinois: This is another state where considerable work has been done, but our desired outcome for a teacher licensure pathway has not yet been achieved. Illinois advocacy representatives have also submitted a crosswalk to early childhood educator standards and have been working with both the board of education and legislators. They have draft legislation, are cultivating a legislative sponsor, and have reached out to teacher union representatives and the Chicago Public Schools to seek support from them as well. Illinois has established a network of

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superintendents from the four public school districts that have Montessori programs, who will support legislation when it is proposed.

Virginia: While legislation was proposed in 2019, it was not passed as originally intended and was incorporated into an alternative teacher licensure bill that allows individual districts to apply for district specific licensure pathways to meet their needs. The Arlington school district is home to the only district Montessori program in Virginia, and they have been collaborating with the Virginia Montessori Association and MPPI, as well as with state officials, to create a VA Department of Education approved licensure pathway for their Montessori teachers. When the pathway is approved, other Virginia districts should be able to replicate the process allowing them to move forward with expanding Montessori to their districts.

Michigan: Michigan has been making great progress after years of working to establish relationships in the state. Over the last couple of years, they have really concentrated their efforts and have been able to build a strong relationship with a state senator who is willing to propose legislation. The Michigan Montessori Education Advocacy Network has been working closely with MPPI to organize support within their Montessori community and be prepared for outreach to legislators whose districts have Montessori schools to make sure they understand the value and importance of passing the legislation.

Pathways to state teacher licensure are key to the growth of quality public Montessori programs. MPPI and our state advocacy leads are deep into this work, in these seven states above and in others as well.

In addition, we are also focusing some of this grant funding on work to

States with Montessori credential pathways



Connecticut: An AMI diploma + twelve additional credits qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Georgia: A MACTE-accredited credential + three special education credits + content area assessment tests and an ethics test qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Hawaii: A MACTE-accredited credential + practicum + two elementary method courses from Chaminade University of Honolulu qualify for a PK-3 teaching certificate.



Indiana: A MACTE-accredited credential + a level-specific exam qualifies for a full teaching certificate with no restrictions.



Maryland: A MACTE-accredited, AMI, or AMS credential + a state test qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Minnesota: A MACTE-accredited credential + pedagogy and content exams qualify for a three-year renewable certificate.



Montana: A MACTE-accredited Montessori credential qualifies for a full teaching certificate with no restrictions.



Ohio: A MACTE, AMI, or AMS credential qualifies for a four-year provisional certificate, during which time additional requirements must be met.



South Carolina: A MACTE-accredited credential + the PRAXIS exam qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Wisconsin: A MACTE or AMI credential + 3 additional courses + EdTPA/PRAXIS qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.

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make sure that Montessori programs are able to participate and be appropriately recognized for their quality within state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. Michigan and Illinois are two states that have been making excellent progress in this area.

Currently, MPPI advocacy representatives in Michigan are negotiating an increase in the recognition of the Montessori credential within their Great Start to Quality system that would enable Montessori teachers to serve as lead teachers in preschool for all classrooms. In Illinois, a committee working on a pilot for ExceleRate 2.0 has proposed that Montessori classrooms will be allowed exemptions from certain items within environmental assessments that are not in line with quality Montessori classrooms, enabling Montessori programs to score at the gold circle of

quality in the state. These are very important policy wins for Michigan and Illinois and help lay the groundwork for Montessori programs in both public and private schools to access public funding including universal preschool dollars.

MPPI and our state advocacy leads are constantly at work amassing details and experience working on these important state policy issues. So many of the issues overlap with or influence each other, so every time another win is achieved, we become so much closer to the goal of making quality Montessori programs available to every child.

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