The Anne Arundel County Board of Education SUPPORTS Senate Bill 581 Workgroup to Study the Implementation of Universal Access to Prekindergarten for 4-Year-Olds. This bill would establish the Workgroup to Study the Implementation of Universal Access to Prekindergarten for 4-Year-Olds and require the workgroup to study and make recommendations, and report its findings to the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education by September 1, 2017.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) believes that strong State and county funding support of Pre-K –12 public education will ensure that all students have the programs, services, and instructional support needed to meet rigorous standards established for student performance. As such, we believe that it is important that AACPS has a role in the workgroup created by Senate Bill 581. The participation of a large school system like AACPS would help ensure that the impact of implementing universal prekindergarten on a larger school system is recognized and considered when making final recommendations. The expansion to universal prekindergarten would require AACPS to increase the number of prekindergarten classrooms by approximately 250. In addition to the staffing increase and building space, AACPS would also be impacted by the number of approved nonpublic prekindergarten programs, which are severely limited in portions of the county. AACPS currently partners with Head Start to provide some prekindergarten programs.

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education respectfully urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE committee report on Senate Bill 581.