



HB 495
Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program - Funding
House Ways and Means Committee
February 15, 2023
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 495, which requires the state to establish funding for the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP) that is sufficient to provide a subsidy to all eligible families, and codifies recent gains in the program such as increasing income eligibility for families and ensuring the subsidies reach a substantial portion of the market share.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth and families each year, we recognize the important role that the CCSP plays in allowing parents to enter and maintain employment while providing valuable educational opportunities for their children.

The CCSP is a critical safety-net program for low-income families. We work with families every day across central and western Maryland, and the high costs of child care is a substantial burden for the low-income households we serve. The stories we hear from our clients about the rising costs of child care mirror what the data shows: across Maryland, child care ranks as the first, second, or third highest household expense in all jurisdictions in the state.¹ Securing scholarships through the CCSP is often the only way families can access the affordable, quality child care they need in order to secure and maintain employment.

The gains Maryland has made to make the CCSP more accessible and effective should be made permanent, even after the funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is exhausted. Over the past few years, Scholarship rates were increased to the 70th percentile of the market, income eligibility was expanded to just over \$90,000 for a family of four, and parental copayments were eliminated for many families and drastically reduced for all remaining households. Additionally, HB 495 provides future safeguards in the program by prohibiting MSDE from unilaterally imposing enrollment freezes in the program, a previous practice that left many families struggling to piecemeal child care options together. All of these gains Maryland has made to improve the CCSP should be maintained and supported.

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 495.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy

¹ Maryland Family Network. 2022. Child Care Demographics. <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Maryland%202022.pdf>

