

February 13, 2023

**Testimony Concerning HB 495:
Early Childhood Development - Child Care Scholarship Program - Funding**

Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means

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Prince George's Child Resource Center envisions vibrant, healthy communities where individuals and families care, support and advocate for each other and invest in creating opportunities for children to develop strong, successful life paths. The Resource Center has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they seek child care where their children can thrive.

We urge the Committee to support HB 495 and put into law our recent gains for child care and specifically the investments in the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP). Specifically, it would put into law the recent gains including:

- expanded family eligibility
- co pay relief for most families
- payment rate increases

Scholarship rates have risen from their abysmal level of the 9th percentile of the market 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 others. These gains have been funded with federal dollars approved by Congress. It is time for Maryland leaders to see it through and continue these investments.

Plus, the bill would guarantee access to CCSP for all families who meet eligibility criteria. Although there is currently no CCSP wait list, **we know from the parents and child care providers we serve that processing issues related to the child care scholarship have resulted in some not being able to access the scholarship.** Please do not assume that families are not utilizing the scholarship because they don't need it; in many cases, they just cannot access it in the time frame they need it. Let's fix that – not cut the funding!

We have seen enrollment freezes imposed over the past two decades as a means of cutting costs. Under the bill, MSDE would not be able to unilaterally impose an enrollment freeze. We must ensure that the State remains committed to protecting recent progress. We hear the General Assembly leaders are already thinking about a big cut to child care – this is the wrong direction! The child care crisis is not over in Maryland.

The Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP) details have seen important improvements thanks to your leadership. There's more to do and we can do it together. Thank you for supporting HB 495.

