



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Ways and Means Committee

HB 495: Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program - Alterations

February 15, 2023

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities live the lives they want with the support they need. The Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP) provides financial assistance with child care costs to eligible families in Maryland. The eligible family will receive a voucher to use to purchase child care directly from the provider of their choice. The CCSP has undergone dramatic improvements over the last couple of years. Additional funding coupled with policy changes, including changes to income eligibility requirements and raised rates, allowed more families to qualify for subsidies and be able to afford more child care. **This bill would increase access to the CCSP by requiring funding, limiting the wait list or “program freeze”, maintaining or increasing reimbursement rates, requiring copayments not be more than the prior year, and requiring income eligibility requirements not be less than the prior year.**

The potential impact to families of children with disabilities must be noted.

- Eligible families of children with disabilities are given first priority.
- There is a “special disability rate” that can be used to support children with disabilities.

Programs must provide children with disabilities and their families an equal opportunity to participate in the child care program and services by providing reasonable modifications, accommodations, and provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services needed for effective communication.ⁱ Some of these additional accommodations may be costly. In recognition of that, **Maryland law allows for increased CCSP reimbursement rates to a child care provider for the additional costs of providing one-time or ongoing accommodations to a child with a disability – up to 15% above the traditional reimbursement rates or more if approved by MSDE.**ⁱⁱ

The majority of child care providers want to support children with disabilities but need assistance to do so. It is our understanding that this “special disability rate” has not been utilized since SFY1998.ⁱⁱⁱ **Making sure this rate is known about and used, coupled with other efforts to streamline access to the CCSP, would help the families of children with disabilities who are still struggling to find and keep high quality child care where their children with disabilities can learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities.**

Hb495 allows more families, including families of children with disabilities, to access the child care they need. In order to provide all children, including children with disabilities, and their families with equal access to quality, inclusive child care, it is important that funding is adequate, and that the process works for providers and families.

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ⁱ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 (2009).

ⁱⁱ COMAR 13A.14.06.11(E)(5).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Maryland Family Network Public Policy Handbook 2017-2018*, Appendix B.