



Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Anne Arundel County Food Bank

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT OF HB 352

Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2024

House Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2024

Submitted by Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program, and opposes any cost-cutting measures to restrict access to this vital safety-net for families. Consequently, we urge the committee to reject the BRFA provision that would allow the Administration to re-institute waitlists for the CCS program.

Amidst rising inflation and the disappearance of extra supports that were prevalent during the height of the pandemic, low-income Marylanders are struggling to stay afloat. Direct service organizations in our coalition report rising numbers of households needing support for essentials like food and shelter. The CCS program is a critical safety-net for working families, allowing Marylanders to access affordable, quality, inclusive childcare. Childcare ranks as one of the top four highest household expenses for Maryland families across all jurisdictions in the state, and without supports like CCS, childcare costs and responsibilities are the primary reason many women exit the labor force.^{1,2}

MAP thanks the Administration for the significant investment in the CCS program in FY 2024 and FY 2025 but is alarmed by the proposed BRFA language that would allow the Administration to create waitlists for CCS. The proposed language removes the essential safeguards in the program that advocates, and the Maryland General Assembly championed together in the 2023 CCS legislation. We are deeply concerned that allowing the Department to unilaterally institute waitlists for the CCS program will harm families by limiting access to this fundamentally important safety-net program, and can upend childcare arrangements for families. The last time waitlists were imposed, it took eight years for Maryland families to regain access to the program. While we know there are budget challenges ahead, we should not be looking to the Child Care Scholarship program as a place to find cost-savings. Dollars allocated to this program are not an expense, but an investment in our children, in Maryland families, and in our economy as a whole.

Marylander's Against Poverty appreciates your consideration and strongly urges the committee to strike page 8 line 25 through page 9 line 23 to protect access to the Child Care Scholarship program.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ Maryland Family Network. 2024. Child Care Demographics.

<https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Maryland%202024.pdf>

² OECD Library. (n.d.). OECD Labour Force Statistics. OECD Library. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-labour-force-statistics_23083387