



**Testimony in Support with Amendment of Senate Bill 362
Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2024**
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 29, 2024

Maryland Rise 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. The CCS program is a critical safety-net for working families, allowing Marylanders to access affordable, quality, inclusive child care. Child care ranks as one of the top four highest household expenses for Maryland families across all jurisdictions in the state, and without supports like CCS, child care costs and responsibilities are the primary reason many women exit the labor force.^{1,2}

Maryland Rise 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 child care arrangements for families. The last time waitlists were imposed in 2011, it took seven years for all eligible Maryland families to regain access to the program. The enhancements Maryland has made to the CCS over the past few years has led to historic enrollment in the program, providing more access and equitable care to over 32,000 children.³ Allowing for the institution of waitlists will derail much of that progress. 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.

Maryland Rise strongly urges the committee to strike page 8 line 25 through page 9 line 23 to protect access to the Child Care Scholarship program. Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by: Lisa Klingenmaier, Executive Director

Maryland Rise works to promote economic opportunity for all Marylanders.

¹ Maryland Family Network. 2024. Child Care Demographics. <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Maryland%202.0.pdf>

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

³ Maryland State Department of Education. 2023. Data – Participation Data Children by County. <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/data>