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**TO:** Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**BILL:** SB 687 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning from Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program

**DATE:** March 5, 2025

**POSITION:** Letter of Support w/Amendments

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**Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:**

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the State Board of Education support Senate Bill (SB) 687 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning from Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program – Establishment with amendments. This legislation proposes to establish the Youth Transitioning from Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program in the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program.

Helping low-income families gain access to high-quality child care is MSDE's CCS program's primary focus. MSDE recognizes that when a family has reliable and trustworthy child care, parents can better focus on employment and/or educational attainment, which could then lead to a healthier family dynamic that fosters independence. Furthermore, when Maryland families succeed at obtaining and maintaining employment, it impacts the stabilization of the statewide economy.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) shares the same overarching goal in support of independence as it relates to assisting foster youth within their pre-established Youth Transition to Adulthood Program. DHS executed the transitional youth program to equip participants with necessary life skills, while assisting them in attaining educational assistance, housing, and employment, so that they successfully transition into independent adulthood. Coincidentally, some of the participants in DHS's program also have children that require child care services as well, to support their active participation in programs that will maintain their independence. Hence, DHS pays for the child care services of the foster youth participants' children while they are enrolled in the program.

Essentially, SB 687 proposes that the CCS program establish a Youth Transitioning from Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program to assist fostered youth (with children) with the cost of child care as they participate in a youth transitional program just like the one that DHS currently executes and financially supports. While MSDE is in support of the overall intent behind the bill, the agency considers this service duplicative. Therefore, the agency suggests eliminating the pilot program responsibilities and requirements intended for the MSDE's CCS program as stipulated in the bill, allowing DHS to continue to execute all foster care and transitional youth support services.

Moreover, the CCS program is designed to assist families engaged in an approved activity (proof of working or attending school or training) with the cost of child care until their income exceeds 85% of the State Median Income. The CCS program does not currently have a system in place to provide

additional support services should a participant fall short of meeting that mandate. MSDE anticipates that participants would be at risk of falling through a “proverbial crack” due to the lack of such a system and establishing a system to track those who are not engaged in an approved activity would require costly modifications and upgrades to the Child Care Scholarship portal currently in place.

In closing, MSDE recommends amending SB 687 to ensure DHS’s continuance in carrying out the already pre-established programmatic services, and include a stipulation that requires setting up a referral program, which would enable the transition of child care payments from DHS to the CCS Program without a break in service, as long as the family’s income is below 85% of the State Median Income and the child is enrolled in a CCS approved program at the time of transferring benefits. MSDE believes the suggested modifications to SB 687 would then allow the continued success of DHS’s youth transitioning to adulthood services, while eliminating the need for a new pilot program to accomplish the overall objective of the bill.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **SB 687**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504, if you would like any additional information.