



March 4, 2026

House Ways & Means Committee | House Appropriations Committee

House Bill 1321 — Child Care Scholarship Program - Enrollment and Copays - Alterations

Position: Support

Maryland Advocates for Rural and Family Youth (MARFY) respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1321, which would strengthen Maryland’s Child Care Scholarship Program by ensuring more equitable enrollment practices and by limiting burdensome copays for families in greatest need. This bill is a meaningful step toward expanding access to quality childcare for Maryland’s children and families, particularly those navigating economic hardship or transitioning to independence.

Childcare is foundational to family stability and economic opportunity. For many parents, stable access to affordable, quality childcare is a prerequisite for employment, education, workforce participation, and long-term financial security. Without it, parents—especially young parents emerging from foster care, independent living programs, or other transitional settings—face barriers to pursuing work, continuing education, or training that are essential to achieving self-sufficiency.

Young parents who have experienced foster care or are in independent living programs often enter adulthood without robust support networks and may lack intergenerational resources. For these parents, access to reliable childcare is not a “nice-to-have”—it is a critical support that enables them to:

- Attend school, vocational training, or workforce development programs;
- Maintain consistent employment and build long-term economic stability;
- Provide nurturing environments for their children’s early learning and developmental growth.

House Bill 1321 helps ensure that the Child Care Scholarship Program prioritizes the enrollment of families who need it most by prohibiting enrollment freezes from applying to certain vulnerable individuals and requiring the Department of Education to establish waitlists with priority for those with greatest financial need and young children. Additionally, the bill strengthens support for families by limiting copays for low-income participants, reducing financial barriers that often deter sustained program participation.

Increasing access to childcare yields broader societal benefits. Access to quality childcare programs not only support children’s readiness for school but also yield long-term benefits such as improved educational outcomes and economic participation. Meanwhile, parents with reliable childcare can fully engage in the workforce and contribute to Maryland’s economic vitality.



Maryland Association of
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House Bill 1321 also requires outreach and support for families eligible for publicly funded pre-kindergarten, ensuring parents and caregivers are informed of all early learning opportunities available to them. This holistic approach to expanding childcare access aligns with the state's broader goals of improving educational access, closing opportunity gaps, and supporting family economic mobility.

For these reasons, MARFY strongly supports House Bill 1321. We urge the Committee to give this bill a favorable report and help remove unnecessary barriers to childcare for Maryland's children and families—especially those striving to build stable and successful futures. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information call or email:

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