



House Bill 1321

Child Care Scholarship Program – Enrollment and Copays – Alterations

Submitted to: House Ways and Means Committee & House Appropriations Committee

Hearing Date: March 4, 2026

Position: Favorable

My name is Ruby Daniels. I am the President of the Maryland State Family Child Care Association, representing nearly 4,000 licensed family childcare providers across Maryland. I am also a family childcare provider with over 30 years of experience serving working families in my community.

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 1321.

The Child Care Scholarship Program is a lifeline for working families. When enrollment freezes happen, the impact is immediate and devastating. Families call us every day needing care so they can work, attend school, or participate in job training but many are turned away because they cannot afford tuition without assistance.

HB 1321 provides critical guardrails. It ensures that families experiencing the greatest hardship those receiving Temporary Cash Assistance, children receiving SSI, and children who are homeless are not shut out during a freeze. These are families who simply cannot wait.

Equally important are the copay protections. For families earning at or below 50% of regional median income, eliminating copays can mean the difference between maintaining employment and losing a job. Even small copays can create instability for families already struggling with housing, transportation, and food costs.

As a provider, I also appreciate the bill's provisions around presumptive eligibility and timely payments. When families experience delays in approval, providers are often forced to carry the financial burden. Ensuring stability for families also ensures stability for small childcare businesses.

Finally, the coordination with publicly funded Pre-K during enrollment freezes is thoughtful policy. Families should be informed and supported in navigating available options rather than left to figure it out on their own.

What truly sets House Bill 1321 apart is its intentional connection between the Child Care Scholarship Program and publicly funded prekindergarten including private, community-based and family childcare programs participating in Pre-K Expansion.

When enrollment freezes occur, families are often left confused and discouraged. This bill does not simply place them on a waitlist it requires the Department to actively identify children who qualify for **publicly funded Pre-K and connect those families directly to available slots**, including private programs with open seats.



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This is smart policy.

By prioritizing children under age three and directing eligible four-year-old into under enrolled Pre-K programs, Maryland can:

- Reduce waitlists while maximizing existing capacity
- Stabilize community-based and private Pre-K providers
- Ensure children receive early learning services sooner
- Strengthen the mixed-delivery system

For families, this means **immediate access to high-quality early education instead of prolonged uncertainty.**

For the education system, this is **a long-term investment.** Children who attend quality Pre-K are more prepared for kindergarten. They are less likely to require intensive academic interventions, special education referrals related to lack of early exposure, or costly remediation services later. Connecting eligible children early helps prevent gaps before they widen.

As a provider serving children for over 30 years, I have seen firsthand how early access changes outcomes. When children enter kindergarten ready socially, emotionally, and academically everyone benefits: the child, the family, the teacher, and the school system.

House Bill 1321 is not just about managing a freeze. It is about **building a more coordinated, efficient, and equitable early childhood system for Maryland.**

This forward-thinking provision is what makes this bill especially strong and worthy of your favorable support.

I respectfully urge **a favorable report on House Bill 1321.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Maryland's children, families, and childcare providers.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruby Daniels

President, Maryland State Family Child Care Association