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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Thursday, March 5, 2026

To: Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair

Delegate Jessica Feldmark, Vice Chair

Ways and Means Committee

The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express its support for **HB 1321 – Child Care Scholarship Program – Enrollment and Copays – Alterations.**

HB 1321 protects vulnerable families from the harmful effects that enrollment freezes in the Child Care Scholarship Program can create. This legislation ensures that families maintain access to essential child care and early education services and are not forced to bear the sudden financial burden that comes with losing those supports.

HB 1321 establishes important protections for families and children experiencing significant hardship. The bill provides that enrollment freezes imposed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) may not apply to children who are homeless, families enrolled in Temporary Cash Assistance or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and children receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). By codifying these exemptions into law, the bill ensures that some of Maryland's most vulnerable families remain protected during times of program instability.

The legislation also requires that, if an enrollment freeze becomes necessary, MSDE must establish a waitlist that prioritizes applicants with the greatest financial need and families seeking to enroll children under the age of three. In addition, the bill directs MSDE to identify and assist families on the waitlist who may qualify for publicly funded prekindergarten by providing information about available slots and contact information for local providers.

HB 1321 further supports Maryland families by creating a more equitable and affordable copayment structure within the Child Care Scholarship Program. The bill establishes a tiered copayment system aligned with a family's ability to pay. This structure ensures that copayments remain manageable and reflect the financial realities faced by working families.

HB 1321 strengthens protections for vulnerable families while providing meaningful financial support. For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus respectfully urges a **favorable report on HB 1321.**