

Senate Bill 920 addresses all of these barriers to receiving the Child Care Scholarship by:

1. Establishing Presumptive Eligibility

- If a family certifies that they are eligible, then the family is “presumed” eligible for the Maryland the child care scholarship and can immediately enroll their children in care while the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) reviews their paperwork and formal approval is pending.
- To continue receiving a subsidy a family will complete the formal application for the child care scholarship within 15 days of the initial certification form.

2. Expanding “Express Lane” & Dual Eligibility

- Maryland families who qualify for Temporary Cash Assistance and Supplemental Security Income automatically qualify for the child care scholarship. The bill will expand that automatic access to additional benefits like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, housing vouchers, and Guaranteed Access.

3. Creating a Provider Payment Timeline

- MSDE will be required to pay child care providers participating in the child care scholarship program within 10 business days of receiving a full invoice.

4. Simplifying the Child Care Scholarship Application

- MSDE will be required to work with national experts to review, update, streamline, and simplify the child care scholarship application to ensure it is accessible, clear, and easily completed by all families.

5. Terminating Requirement for Child Support to Receive Child Care Scholarship

- Maryland will no longer require an individual to pursue or receive child care support payments or apply for services from a child support agency to be eligible for a child care scholarship.

Securing timely child care assistance is critical for families who are trying to get into or remain in the workforce and timely payments are critical for providers who accept placements from families in the scholarship program. This legislation will simplify and accelerate the process for the Child Care Scholarship and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 920.

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MAJORITY LEADER

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 370 – Education – Educational Interpreter – Certification Requirements

March 15, 2022

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

The Maryland Child Care Scholarship Program (formerly known as the Child Care Subsidy Program), provides much needed assistance to families to help defray the cost of child care for low-income working families. Unfortunately, the application process itself is complicated, burdensome, and lengthy preventing many from getting and keeping child care benefits. Each step of the process -- the application, eligibility redetermination process, and reporting of interim changes income and family circumstances -- creates needless barriers for families. With little technical assistance available, families rely on child care providers (increasing their burden), as well as on-line chat rooms and other resources to successfully complete applications.

Often families are forced to provide duplicative information that has already been provided to qualify for other programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), WIC, housing vouchers or Maryland higher education scholarships. These programs have overlapping eligibility requirements, similar application and redetermination processes, and require voluminous amounts of paperwork. It can be overwhelming to provide the necessary information to multiple agencies at multiple times throughout the year to continue receiving essential services.

Once the child care subsidy application is submitted, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has up to 30 days to process the application. If at any time incorrect or incomplete information is submitted by the family, the application is returned and the process starts all over again. At this point, the desired child care slot may not even be available anymore.

A final barrier to receiving timely child care assistance is the requirement that parents collect any court-ordered child support in order to receive benefits. While child support enforcement may provide more resources for the child, the implementation of such a rule is problematic. The policy disproportionately affects and often prevents single-parent families from accessing child care support. Families are faced with many "hoops" to establish parentage, teen parents are less likely to pursue child support, and in many families this will result in one child, but not others, accessing child care.