



Hearing Testimony March 15, 2022
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC

Senate Bill 920: Early Childhood Development - Child Care Scholarship Program - Alterations

SUPPORT

On behalf of the 20,000 working people in our region represented by SEIU Local 500, we offer our strong support for **Senate Bill 920**. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty at institutions of higher education, staff at non-profits, and many other working people across the region.

As the union for family child care providers across the state, we would like to thank Senator King for her steadfast leadership on issues impacting the child care community and working families. SB 920 would require the State Department of Education to pay child care providers within 10 days of receipt of an invoice. This will address the unstable income providers have faced due to delays or non-payments from the Child Care Scholarship (Maryland State Childcare Association). Delayed payments or non-payments have been a consistent issue that our members face throughout the state. The inconsistent payments from the state have forced many Family Child Care providers to leave the industry. Their departure from providing child care has resulted in fewer family child care centers from being open and providing accessible child care for that would allow workers to return to the workforce.

Our working members often have children at home, and require access to child care so that they can fully focus on their duties in the workplace. It is essential that our members are not forced to choose between their careers and their children's safety, so ensuring access to child care, especially for our low-income members, is of the utmost importance.

Low-income families have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in regards to access to child care. According to the Maryland State Childcare Association, programs serving mostly higher-income families were almost twice as likely as those serving low-income families to report being physically open. Even federally-funded after-school programs in high-poverty neighborhoods were more likely to be closed during the first summer of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing cost and availability issues, leading to child care deserts in many areas across the state.

Now is the time to make sure our low-income members do not continue to be left behind. Awarding a subsidy that eliminates a copay for individuals involved in the Child Care Scholarship Program allows increased access to child care services for the families that need it most. Ensuring individuals who receive this subsidy are in education or career training programs and who receive benefits like WIC, SNAP, federal housing choice voucher, guaranteed access grant, supplemental security income benefits or temporary cash

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assistance will allow these families greater opportunity for economic, familial, and career-related prosperity.

SB 920 promises to address the disparities in access to child care for low-income families while relieving providers of the stress that comes with an unstable income. **For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 supports this legislation.**

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