



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

2810 Carrollton Road
Annapolis, Md. 21403
Phone: (410) 820-9196
Email: info@mscca.org
www.mscca.org

The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 5000 members working in the field of early childhood. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

House Bill 995 & 933 Child Care Scholarship Program - Alterations House Ways and Means Committee Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) enthusiastically supports House Bills 995. As a non-profit representing close to 5,000 child care professionals, we are appreciative and offer a sincere thanks to the General Assembly and especially to champions for child care and children - Delegates Solomon, Queen, and Ebersole for their advocacy, leadership and support for the important child care package of legislation.

MSCCA's priorities agenda includes ensuring families have access to affordable, consistent, quality child care options and to alleviate barriers for families and child care providers as child care is essential to the economy. We believe children are our most important natural resource and must meet the needs of all Maryland's children from birth to five and beyond. HB 995 aligns with these priorities and will address numerous obstacles and inequities to fix our child care scholarship system and support more deserving children and families.

Prior to the pandemic MSCCA conducted surveys of our members focused on child care scholarship/subsidy program as we were receiving many complaints about delays in payment for services rendered, families struggling with renewal paperwork and new families inquiring for child care being denied and unable to speak to anyone at MSDE to help them. MSCCA met with partner associations and co-hosted town halls focused on child care scholarship/subsidy to gain even more feedback, discussion and provide possible solutions to address concerns within this state system as more money is being invested in child care scholarships. We need an equitable, efficient way to support families, children and the child care businesses electing to accept subsidies/scholarships.

HB 995 will enhance efficiencies and assist MSDE by requiring them to work with national experts to review, update, streamline, and simplify the child care scholarship application to ensure it is accessible, equitable, clear, and easily completed by all families.

Presumptive eligibility is a key component of HB 995 that will allow families to enter or reenter the workforce or school immediately as they will be presumed eligible and be given time to provide documentation necessary for review for formal approval while their child/children are in a licensed legal child care setting. Without child care the workforce cannot work.

HB 995 will expand and expedite automatic access to additional benefits like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, housing vouchers, and Guaranteed Access therefore eliminating additional stress for families while creating a more efficient state system to serve our most at risk children/families.

HB 995 establishes in law a provider payment timeline requiring MSDE to pay child care providers participating in the child care scholarship program within 10 business days of receiving the full invoice. Child care small businesses have been deterred from participating in the scholarship program due to the delays in payment and communication issues. As struggling small, fully tuition dependent businesses, we cannot continue to subsidize the subsidy system. Stakeholders

utilizing the system should be considered and included to be successful. The system needs to change to support all those participating, including providers while still maintaining accountability measures for all.

MSCCA fully supports the four components of this bill as they will impact positive change for children, families and child care providers. Child care is the workforce behind the workforce. Maryland has lost over 900 child care businesses since January of 2020 and tens of thousands of slots creating access issues. We must find ways to support child care and families as it is an economic and equity imperative.

MSCCA urges a favorable report.