

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Testimony to the Ways and Means Committee

In support of

House Bill 933: Child Care Scholarship Program- Alterations (Maryland Child Care Working Families Act)

March 4, 2022

Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on House Bill 933: Child Care Scholarship Program- Alterations (Maryland Child Care Working Families Act).

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a world-class system of public schools for our state's students. A contributor to the success of this world class education is high quality child care. From research spanning across high quality early childhood education and afterschool programs, there is much evidence to suggest that there are significant benefits to investing in child care. One longitudinal study showed that compared to fewer or no years of participation, children who had 4-6 years of early childhood education were associated with a 48% higher rate of degree completion (associate's degree or higher).¹ Another study found that high quality afterschool programs were associated with improved academic, social, and behavioral outcomes; high levels of participation with elementary and middle school students' showed gains of 12 percentiles in math achievement test scores.²

However, despite the benefits of childcare, this resource has not been readily available to everyone who needs it. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers were inaccessible mainly due to cost and limited availability. In 2017, a family of three in Maryland living at the poverty level would pay 14% of their income despite the fact that, at the time, federal requirements stated copayments should be no more than 7% of a family's income.³ Since March 2020, the state has seen 855 fewer childcare providers and there have been more shortages in the workforce partially due to families not having reliable child care.⁴

This bill would create some alterations to the current child care scholarship program by:

- Specifying eligibility requirements and ensuring that the State Department of Education is properly considering the annual income and size of a child's family when determining initial eligibility;
- Allowing a child to remain eligible for subsidized child care for the following 12 months despite changes in the status of the parent(s), residency within the state, increase in gross annual household income (with certain provisions), or if the child has reached 13 years of age (or 19 for children with special needs);

¹ Aurthur Reynolds et al., A Multicomponent, Preschool to Third Grade Preventive Intervention and Educational Attainment at 35 Years of Age, 2018,

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2668645>

² Deborah Vandell et al., "Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs, 2007,

https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_iafis04c04.pdf

³ Rachel Baye, "Maryland Poor Getting Little Help on Childcare", 2017,

<https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2017-11-22/maryland-poor-get-little-help-on-childcare>

⁴ Elizabeth Shwe, "Lawmakers Tout Bills to Support Providers and Make Child Care More Affordable, 2022,

<https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/02/11/lawmakers-tout-bills-to-support-providers-and-make-child-care-more-affordable/>

- Ensuring that children from families with very low income, children with families whose total assistance does not exceed \$1 million, and vulnerable children are a priority if a waiting list is implemented; and
- Establishing certain Child Care Scholarship Program copayment requirements for certain families.

High quality child care is the foundation to student success in a world class education system. By passing House Bill 933, the Maryland General Assembly would be providing students with benefits like social and emotional wellbeing that contribute towards later success for our state's future. Passing House Bill 933 would also offer greater opportunities for current parents and other caregivers to participate in the workforce. Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 933.

If you have questions or requests for additional information, you can email:

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