

March 2, 2022

**Testimony Concerning Support for:
HB 995: Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations**

Submitted to the House Committee on Ways and Means

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We urge your support for legislation that will benefit working families, and the struggling child care providers that serve them.

Prince George’s Child Resource Center envisions vibrant, healthy communities where individuals and families care, support, and advocate for each other and invest in creating opportunities for children to develop strong, successful life paths. The Resource Center has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they seek child care where their children can thrive.

HB 995 has the potential to eliminate barriers that families are currently facing when attempting to access the child care scholarship. **As the Child Care Resource Center for Prince George’s County, we hear directly from parents who have had to reject employment offers because they could not get the scholarship processed; and we hear from providers who are no longer willing to accept scholarship since they cannot count on payment. This has a disastrous impact on families, providers, and our economy.** The scholarship program, and tying it to EXCELS (Maryland’s quality rating system), was designed so that children with little access to resources could enroll in high-quality child care programs. **The current state of scholarship administration is actually causing the opposite:** the highest quality providers, who can fill their programs with full-pay children, choose not to provide care for lower-income children. This is increasing inequity in Maryland, and if this goes unchecked, we will see disparities school readiness increase.

Of all the hard decisions you need to make as legislators, this is an easy one. Presumptive eligibility means access for families and timely payments means child care businesses can be further stabilized in these difficult times.

Thank you for your leadership for our community. Together we can help child care programs to stay open successfully and offer more choices for families, when we make sure that all the pieces and parts of policy ideas come together. Again, I urge your support for HB 995.

