



Testimony Concerning HB 995
“Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship
Program – Alterations”
Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee
March 4, 2022

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) strongly supports HB 995, which would make vast improvements to the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP). These alterations would render CCSP far more effective in serving the parents and child care providers who participate and in achieving its mission. MFN urges your favorable consideration.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

CCSP is currently the State’s largest single investment in early childhood education. It serves a dual purpose of bolstering Maryland’s workforce and economy by removing a major barrier to employment for low- to moderate-income parents, who would otherwise struggle to find and afford care arrangements for their children. CCSP is therefore critical to our efforts to keep parents earning and children learning.

By raising subsidy rates and expanding eligibility, Maryland’s program has in recent years been transformed from one of the poorest ones to one of the very best in the country. For this, MFN commends the General Assembly and the Administration. Unfortunately, CCSP still too often fails to fulfill its promise. Parents can face lengthy delays in the scholarship application process, and consequently fail to take advantage of job opportunities. Providers struggle with late payments from the State that hamper their ability to sustain affordable, high quality programs. The application itself is overdue for careful review and streamlining.

MFN believes all these shortcomings may help explain why, according to Department of Budget and Management estimates, only 22 percent of income-eligible families and only 29 percent of child care providers participate in CCSP.

HB 995 would establish a system of presumptive and proxy eligibility for parents while their applications are determined, require prompt payments to providers, and initiate a thorough review of application procedures. These would constitute the next major strides in the ongoing improvement of CCSP. MFN strongly urges the Committee’s favorable consideration.

