



**Testimony Concerning HB 995 – Early Childhood Development -
Child Care Scholarship Program - Alterations**

Submitted to House Ways and Means

March 4, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA) is a non-profit organization advocating on behalf of 4,440 registered family child care providers plus an additional 145 registered large family child care homes. The Maryland Scholarship Program was created to help Maryland's families access quality child care programs. Unfortunately, the current system frequently creates confusion and frustration for both parents and providers. Many providers are willing to accept scholarship children in their programs; however, the ongoing problems in the program, like non-payment and delayed payments, causes child care providers to favor private pay families. There is also considerable frustration for parents and providers with the application process; it is cumbersome, confusing and lacks adequate customer service.

Parents share with providers the scholarship application and payment difficulties they experience. One such issue is frequent loss of all or part of their pending application, which results in their application being denied; therefore, the family receives no child care services. Also, when they call the customer service line for help, they are either put on hold for an excessive amount of time, or the representative does not understand them or cannot help them. Some have shared that their calls are never even returned. Parents have even lost employment opportunities due to the length of time it takes to move through the process. Language barriers

are often experienced by parents and providers. Difficulty in being understood by customer service representatives as well as these other issues delay or even halt application process completion.

MSFCCA believes that HB 995 would alleviate some of these obstacles for providers and parents in the Scholarship process. This legislation would offer presumptive eligibility, streamline the process and enable a parent who already participates in certain government programs to immediately receive benefits while waiting for eligibility verification. It was very encouraging to see that the child support stipulation has been removed as well, this will help many parents, especially those involved in Domestic Violence cases. HB 995 also addresses the time that it takes for providers to receive payments for services rendered, currently some providers wait months before receiving payment. This legislation would guarantee payment to providers within 10 days of the Department receiving the invoice from the provider. HB 995 addresses many present concerns and obstacles allowing for more families to benefit from the scholarship program and providers to be guaranteed payment for their services.

The provider community is very appreciative of all that HB 995 offers; however, language barriers in the application process is a very real issue and was not addressed in the legislation. MSFCCA supports HB 995 and respectfully asks for a favorable vote. We believe that it will enable more Maryland Families to access quality child care. Feel free to contact Rebecca Hancock, the MSFCCA Vice President of Public Policy at 301-934-4445 or at kaysplayhousechildcare@gmail.com with any questions.

