



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

March 1, 2023

**House Bill 868
Child Care Provider Stabilization Program - Established**

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT to House Bill 868. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 868 would create the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program to provide financial support in the form of monthly stability funding awards to licensed child care providers. This program would allow funds to be spent on: 1.) cleaning and food supplies that are used directly in the provision of child care, 2.) employee wages, including bonuses, 3.) offsetting expenses paid by subsidized and unsubsidized clients, 4.) promotional materials used to promote the child care provider's program and curriculum, and 5.) any other expenses directly related to the provision of child care, including capital projects.

This grant program would provide much needed support to a vital and essential sector of Marylanders' everyday lives. During the coronavirus pandemic, hundreds of providers were forced to close their doors, leading to less options for child care access for working families. Since that time, the access to quality child care has been at the forefront of concerns surrounding early childhood care and education. This bill would greatly assist Maryland child care providers at risk of closing due to financial hardship.

Child Care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families. Additionally, the Church supports this bill as a part of its priority interest in alleviating poverty in our state, as enabling working parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services. The State should thus do all it can to support access to child care services for working parents. The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 868.