



**Caring For Maryland's Most
Important Natural Resource™**

Maryland State Child Care Association

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The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) is a non-profit, statewide, professional association incorporated in 1984 to promote the growth and development of child care and learning centers in Maryland. MSCCA has over 5500 members working in the field of child care/early childhood education. We believe children are our most important natural resource and work hard to advocate for children, families and for professionalism within the early childhood community.

Testimony: SB 868 Substitute Child Care Provider Pool Pilot Program- Establishment Submitted to: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

March 5, 2025

Maryland State Child Care Association enthusiastically supports SB 868.

Establishing the Substitute Child Care Provider Pool Pilot Program is a necessary lifeline for the essential child care workforce. SB 868 will help to build a workforce pipeline in a declining industry. The goal of SB 868 is to avoid or eliminate disruptions in early childhood education and care, which helps parent work and children thrive.

The pilot will provide opportunities to determine what will work in Maryland, look at other state models, use digital technology, and hopefully, fine tune the pilot to expand to a statewide child care substitute pool in the future.

Child care is a unique business which cannot be automated or delivered curbside. In order for parents to work, go to school or participate in training programs, they must have reliable, consistent, affordable, accessible child care with a qualified workforce.

Staff feel supported when they have options to care for themselves or their family should they get sick, or need time off, therefore a substitute pool will benefit the essential child care workforce with less turnover and less burnout in the field.

National research establishes a clear link between increased access to quality, affordable child care and increased Labor Rate Participation. Additionally, Counting Our Losses publication and research by Maryland Family Network looks at the overwhelming loss to the economy as a result of inadequate child care system. Maryland lost \$2.14 billion due to employee absence and turnover due to child care issues of working Maryland parents of children age five and under.

Child care is a public good and **child care is infrastructure**. Affordability and accessibility to child care ensures a functioning and thriving economy and labor market in the future. Child care in Maryland is declining and it is time to act with thoughtful intention and innovative solutions, however there is no one-size-fits-all solution. MSCCA believes SB 868 creates an opportunity to build a stronger child care infrastructure.

Maryland has lost more than 1,200 child care programs post COVID and without better infrastructure and workforce support, we will continue to decline. SB 868 seeks to build a stronger workforce infrastructure.

The Comptroller of Maryland urges in her State of the Economy recent report, As state leaders, we must do all we can to ensure that parents, especially those with young children, have affordable and accessible child care options and the opportunity to fully participate in the labor force.” <https://marylandtaxes.gov/reports/static-files/research/childcare.pdf>,

The time to act is now. The establishment of a child care substitute pool pilot program to ensure less interruptions in care and education will ensure the workforce is strongly supported, therefore enabling parents to earn while children learn.

MSCCA urges a favorable report.