

Hearing Testimony March 3, 2025
House Ways and Means Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500

HB1121

Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood
Pilot Program - Establishment

SUPPORT

SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty and Staff at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. We urge a FAVORABLE Report on HB1121 – Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program - Establishment.

House Bill 1121 establishes the Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program within the Child Care Scholarship Program. This legislation is a vital step toward supporting young adults who are aging out of foster care, a population that faces unique challenges as they transition to independent adulthood.

The transition from foster care to self-sufficiency is an incredibly difficult period, often marked by limited financial resources, housing instability, and a lack of access to critical services, such as affordable child care. By removing unnecessary application barriers—such as requiring proof of employment, education enrollment, or information about a non-resident parent—this bill ensures that young parents in foster care can access child care assistance when they need it most. These common bureaucratic hurdles too often delay or prevent access to necessary support, at a time when stability is essential for success.

Investing in this program is an investment in the future of Maryland's youth and workforce. By providing financial support for child care services, HB 1121 enables young adults to pursue education and employment opportunities, which is essential to breaking cycles of poverty and instability. Reliable child care is not just a basic need; it is a crucial enabler of long-term economic independence. The ability to access care allows young parents to focus on their education or career path, giving them a better chance to succeed in the workforce and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Furthermore, the pilot program included in this bill offers an opportunity to create a forward-thinking model for long-term support. It allows Maryland to refine its approach based on real-world data, ultimately enhancing the well-being of vulnerable youth who are too often overlooked. The lessons learned from this pilot can be used to craft policies that further improve the outcomes for foster youth and ensure they receive the support they need to thrive.

Maryland must support its most vulnerable young adults as they age out of the foster care system. Without such targeted interventions, many of these youth face a grim future of homelessness, economic hardship, and continued instability, and reaffirms Maryland's commitment to ensuring that every young person aging out of foster care has the support they need to successfully transition into adulthood. HB 1121 is a necessary and compassionate measure that provides these young people with the resources they need to build stable, successful futures.

Therefore, we request a favorable report on House Bill 1121, as it represents an investment in the futures of Maryland's most vulnerable youth.