



February 26, 2025

HB1121 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning from Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program – Establishment

House Ways and Means Committee

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of CONCERN Professional Services, I am writing to express my unwavering support for House Bill 1121. I have worked as a caseworker for over 20 years. In those years, I've assisted numerous young moms in navigating the Child Care Scholarship Application. When people ask me about the most frustrating parts of my job, this one always comes to mind. It is terribly discouraging for young moms to have to work or go to school for several weeks in order to have the necessary paperwork to prove that there is a need for childcare assistance. Who will watch their child at that time? This is in addition to often running into other barriers such as providing documentation from the child's father, who often does not want to cooperate, is providing child support in an informal arrangement, or may not be a safe person with whom to co-parent. I can also recall clients who kept experiencing problems and delays with the processing of their application, including one who somehow had a child assigned to her case who wasn't her child. It took months of phone calls and emails from the two of us to get this corrected. As a result of having so much difficulty and it is taking so much time to process their applications, moms will often lose the slots in the daycare that they have chosen, or they lose that job and must start the process all over again. Starting all over again includes not only having to find a new job but also having to obtain more weeks of documentation to support their application. As everyone knows, the more jobs you lose the harder it is to obtain stable employment.

According to The National Foster Youth Institute, approximately 25% of former foster youth will experience homelessness within four years of emancipating from the foster care system, and 50% of the homeless population nationwide spent time in the foster care system. Although ideas about how to reduce the number of unhoused citizens differ by political party, everyone agrees that it is an important issue to tackle. What if by providing easier access to childcare you could make a difference in reducing these numbers in Maryland? What if by providing easier access to childcare you could place parents on a strong foundation that enabled them to further their education and have well-paid employment? What if by doing this you gave hope to parents to be able to provide stable housing for themselves and their children? What if by removing the current barriers you supported parents breaking the cycles of poverty, trauma, and parental stresses that perpetuate the need for foster care? I believe that your support of HB1121 will indeed be an investment in the futures of some of your most vulnerable constituents. I am asking that you support HB1121.

Sincerely,

Helena Santos-Collins

Helena Santos-Collins, MSW, LCSW-C
Caseworker/Family Worker