

## Testimony in Support of House Bill 910

### Child Care Scholarship Program – Priority for Child Care Providers

**Submitted by:** Randi Albertsen, Innovations in Education, LLC

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**To:** Appropriations

**Date:** March 10, 2026

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

My name is Randi Albertsen. I am a Maryland-certified early childhood educator and an MSDE-approved trainer, and I own Innovations in Education, LLC, where I provide professional development, coaching, and program support to child care centers and family child care providers across Maryland.

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 910, which requires the Maryland State Department of Education to establish a framework to prioritize the children of child care providers for scholarships under the Child Care Scholarship Program for applications received after July 1, 2026.

HB 910 is a practical, targeted step that supports the stability of Maryland’s child care workforce—and by extension, the stability of every other workforce that depends on child care to show up each day.

In my work with programs across Maryland, I see the same reality in every region: child care programs cannot operate without a reliable workforce, and families cannot work without reliable child care.

When a teacher leaves because they cannot afford care for their own child, classrooms close, ratios are disrupted, and programs reduce enrollment. That ripple effect is immediate:

- Parents miss work or lose jobs
- Businesses lose productivity
- Children experience instability and frequent caregiver changes
- Remaining staff burn out, accelerating turnover



HB 910 addresses a core driver of turnover by recognizing that child care professionals should not be placed at the back of the line for the very support system that keeps the field functioning.

Many child care professionals in Maryland already qualify for scholarship assistance based on income, yet their children are not prioritized on the current waitlist.

That contradiction undermines workforce participation and retention. It sends a message—unintentionally, but clearly—that we value child care as a service, but not the people who provide it.

Prioritizing children of child care providers is not preferential treatment; it is an essential workforce stabilization strategy.

The child care workforce is severely undercompensated relative to the qualifications and responsibilities required. The reality is that many child care professionals earn wages that make it difficult to meet basic needs, even while doing highly skilled work. Many are forced to work multiple jobs to survive. A March 3, 2026 Gallup survey found that 71% of public school teachers in the US hold at least one second job. The average **public school teacher's** salary last year was \$72,000. Compare that to the 2025 Maryland Family Network Demographics Report, which found the average annual salary for **child care employees** in Maryland ranges from \$17,854 for an aide to \$41,131 for a child care center director.

This stark contrast in compensation and the consequence of low pay, requiring second jobs, highlights the need to bolster our vital child care employees. These wages are not compatible with the cost of living in many parts of Maryland—especially when child care costs are layered on top. That contradiction undermines recruitment and retention of staff precisely when Maryland childcare programs are facing severe workforce shortages.

From a program operations standpoint, providers also cannot “solve” this internally. Most programs operate on razor-thin margins, with the majority of revenue consumed by staffing costs. Programs cannot sustainably offer free or deeply discounted care to employees without risking closure.

Maryland’s child care system is already under strain. Scholarship waitlists and workforce shortages are not abstract policy concerns—they are daily operational crises.

In practice, when programs cannot hire or retain staff, they must:

- Close classrooms
- Reduce hours



- Turn families away
- Limit infant and toddler slots (the most staffing-intensive classrooms)

HB 910 helps protect supply by supporting the workforce that makes child care slots possible.

HB 910 does not require Maryland to build a brand-new program. It directs MSDE to establish a framework within the existing Child Care Scholarship Program to prioritize a defined group: children of individuals who provide care in:

- Licensed child care centers
- Registered family child care homes
- Registered large family child care homes

This is a measured approach that aligns with current budget realities while still making a meaningful difference.

### Implementation considerations

As MSDE develops the prioritization framework, I respectfully encourage:

- **Clear eligibility definitions** for “child care provider” that include not just center directors but also classroom staff and other child care employees the support program operations
- **A simple verification process** using existing licensing/registration and employment documentation
- **Transparent guidance** to programs and families so the policy is easy to understand and apply
- **Equity safeguards** so prioritization supports providers across settings, including family child care and programs serving high-need communities

HB 910 recognizes a fundamental truth: if Maryland wants stable child care, Maryland must support the people who provide it.

Prioritizing scholarships for the children of child care providers is a targeted, common-sense workforce strategy that strengthens program stability, supports families across all industries, and protects Maryland’s economic productivity.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **Favorable Report** on HB 910.

**Respectfully submitted,** Randi Albertsen Innovations in Education, LLC

