

JULIE PALAKOVICH CARR
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee

Chair, Montgomery County
House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 202
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3037
800-492-7122 Ext. 3037
Julie.PalakovichCarr@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 561
Maryland Child Care Credential Program – Extension of Funding

Early childhood educators are an essential part of Maryland's economic infrastructure. When we invest in them, we invest in children, families, and the broader economy. This bill would restore mandated funding for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program. Established by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the program was designed to recognize and reward individual child care providers who go above and beyond state licensing requirements. The program serves as a part of Maryland's early childhood education workforce strategy, supporting professional development, improving child care quality, and incentivising providers to pursue higher levels of training and education.

For many years, the program was mandated to be funded as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. That funding was scheduled to sunset after FY 2024. During the 2024 session, legislation advanced in the House that would extend program funding, but the funding provision was removed during conference. Unfortunately, the funding also wasn't included in the FY 2025 budget, so the program lapsed for one year. Funding was restored for FY 2026. (Notably, the program is not funded in the Governor's FY 2027 budget.)

This one year lapse in funding had large consequences. Roughly 8,400 child care providers were unable to renew their credentials for more than a year. Providers were also unable to access state funding to help defray their costs for professional development. Even when funding resumed at the start of FY 2026, the program still didn't get back up and running for nearly seven months because MSDE had to go through the procurement process to get a new vendor to administer the application webportal.

This disruption had a tangible impact on our child care workforce, creating uncertainty and halting career advancement efforts for many, and undermining a program that childcare professionals had come to rely on for recognition and reimbursement for professional training. This bill would ensure that the Maryland Child Care Credential Program is protected from future funding interruptions by restoring mandated funding and maintaining continuity of operations.