

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 0910.

Maryland's Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program is essential for working low-income families. Unfortunately, this program is on a partial enrollment freeze indefinitely due to funding constraints. The enrollment freeze is already having enormous effects on the childcare sector. Families cannot afford childcare without the subsidy provided by CCS, and programs are unable to fill their slots.

United Way of Central Maryland recently surveyed parents and found that 83% have been late to work, and 62% faced career obstacles due to lack of reliable childcare. The lower the family income, the more disruptions parents face and the less likely they are to be able to afford necessities. Eighty seven percent (87%) of parents reported cost as a factor in choosing childcare. Maryland moms say:

"I decided to quit my job because the cost of quality childcare was too much."

"The downside is it's so expensive that I can't miss any days off from work or have any extra funds for back up in case of illness or scheduled center closing. The guilt of being a working mom and being away from your child for long hours out of the day is stressful enough and with the cost of daycare in today's economy is unbearable."

Of great concern is the effect on our childcare professionals, some who are also parents. Childcare lead teachers make an average of \$26,877 annually, and center aides make just \$17,854. Full time center-based care for an infant costs \$22,808. Clearly, our educators cannot work without assistance paying for childcare for their own children. We are asking people who cannot afford childcare to provide care for others. This contradiction undermines the entire system.

House Bill 0910 will prioritize eligible childcare professionals on the CCS waitlist. Without CCS, our educators cannot work, risking the collapse of the entire childcare system. This prioritization will not add additional costs to the program, because these families are already eligible by existing criteria. They simply must be the first to come off the waitlist when slots become available.

Please support House Bill 0910 because childcare professionals are the foundation of our early care system, and they cannot continue to serve our children if they cannot afford care for their own. This is a commonsense remedy that protects the workforce we depend on to keep Maryland's childcare system functioning.

Respectfully,

Molly McGriff

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