



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 18, 2026

SB 503
Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program - Funding

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 503. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 503 would continue to provide funding for the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program. The Conference supported Senate Bill 882 of 2024 to make the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program in the Department of Education permanent. Through the program, MSDE provides grants to local jurisdictions or child care licensing regions to increase the supply and ensure the sustainability of family child care providers in areas with higher numbers of low-income Marylanders. Provided therein was a very modest funding level of \$450,000, but only through FY2026. This legislation provides funding through FY2030.

Child Care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families. Additionally, the Church supports this bill as a part of its priority interest in alleviating poverty in our state, as enabling working parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services. The State should thus do all it can to support access to child care services for working parents.

These grants provide much needed support to a promote growth of a vital and essential sector of Marylander's everyday lives. This program helps to reverse a trend of the declining number of child care providers in the state, thus providing greater access to child care options and stabilizing costs for Maryland parents.

The Conference appreciates your consideration, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 503.