
TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 849 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment - Exceptions and Waitlist

DATE: March 25, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and State Department of Education (MSDE) extend their support for **House Bill (HB) 849 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment – Exceptions and Waitlist**. The legislation proposes prohibiting a freeze in CCS Program enrollment for families receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), families participating in the federal TANF program, children receiving Social Security Income (SSI), siblings of children already enrolled, and homeless children. The legislation further requires MSDE to give priority for awarding new slots to certain groups of families in a specific order as long as the waitlist remains in place, and requires that MSDE develop a new application to determine whether an individual meets new prioritization criteria, and to conduct an analysis and complete a report on how MSDE’s approach to determining family eligibility based on job training, and possible alternative methodology.

MSDE strongly supports HB 849. The bill’s prioritization criteria appropriately reflect the needs of Maryland families and represent an important step toward supporting the state’s most vulnerable households. By guaranteeing that all children experiencing homelessness are eligible for a Child Care Scholarship, HB 849 ensures that no homeless child is left without access to stable, high quality care. This change will have an immediate impact, bringing more than 200 homeless children off the CCS waitlist and providing critical support to families who need it most.

As additional scholarships become available, whether through program attrition or increased funding, they are allocated first to families with the lowest incomes; next to those employed at least 20 hours per week in a child care program or prekindergarten setting that accepts CCS; then to children under age 3; and finally to applicants who have been on the waitlist the longest. This prioritization framework ensures that scholarships reach families with the greatest need, helps stabilize and support Maryland’s child care workforce, and strengthens outcomes for infants and toddlers during a critical stage of development, precisely when child care is both most essential and most costly for families and providers.

This legislation will have a meaningful impact on expanding access to CCS for more families in Maryland, even in light of the ongoing partial enrollment freeze. The State Board and MSDE request that the Committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 849**. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.