



March 2, 2026

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 664 – Priority for Child Care Providers

We respectfully urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 664. Maryland's child care educators are the backbone of our early childhood system, yet too many of these essential workers cannot afford the very care they provide. Establishing a framework to prioritize child care educators in the Child Care Scholarship Program would recognize their critical role and ensure they can access affordable care for their own children. This policy would help stabilize the workforce, reduce barriers to employment, and send a clear message that Maryland values the professionals who make it possible for families across the state to work.

Child care educators earn low wages despite the importance and complexity of their work. Many educators qualify for the Child Care Scholarship Program based on income, but the current application and redetermination process can be burdensome, confusing, and time-consuming. Even short gaps in eligibility can force educators to reduce their hours or leave the field entirely. Prioritizing providers, also known as "categorical eligibility," would streamline access, reduce administrative burdens for both educators and the State, and help ensure that educators can remain in the workforce without interruption.

This policy would also strengthen Maryland's child care supply. When educators cannot afford care for their own children, programs face staffing shortages, classrooms close, and families lose access to care. By ensuring educators can reliably access child care assistance, Maryland can improve workforce retention and recruitment, support program stability, and protect access for families statewide. This is a practical and proven strategy to address workforce shortages and strengthen the mixed delivery system.

In community conversations conducted across Montgomery this past fall, early childhood stakeholders consistently ranked categorical eligibility for early childhood educators as a policy change to prioritize in order to help address educator shortages. Additionally, a recent report commissioned by Montgomery County Government, *Montgomery County Early Care and Education Workforce Compensation Study*¹, highlights categorical eligibility as a recommendation to address the study's finding that most early childhood educators are not making enough to make ends meet.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

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The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/MCG%20Workforce%20and%20Compensation%20Study%20Technical%20Report%201.pdf) connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts all young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

¹ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/MCG%20Workforce%20and%20Compensation%20Study%20Technical%20Report%201.pdf>