

March 25, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman,
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill (HB) 1321 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Application Process and Copays - Alterations - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Governor's Office for Children (the Office) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 1321 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Application Process and Copays - Alterations. HB 1321 introduces essential alterations to the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program that connect families on the CCS waitlist to critical information on available early care and education programs, creates a sliding-scale Partial Scholarship model that reduces financial barriers for families, and repeals the presumptive eligibility process.

HB 1321 substantially advances economic mobility by removing co-payments for families earning up to 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. A flexible, sliding-scale framework allows the State to serve additional low-income families while minimizing so-called cliff effects, which can cause families to lose access to critical benefits when they receive a modest wage increase. By using this tiered system, the bill ensures that professional advancement does not result in financial loss, creating a clear pathway for families to pursue employment and education that would otherwise be financially out of reach. Further, by reducing out-of-pocket costs for the lowest-income families, the State is creating opportunities to pursue employment and education opportunities that would otherwise be financially out of reach.

Additionally, the bill mandates that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides crucial information on available early care and education settings to families during any program enrollment freezes. This includes requiring the MSDE to assist applicants in identifying and connecting with publicly funded prekindergarten, Head Start, or Early Head Start programs.

The Office supports HB 1321 because it aligns with our mission to ensure all Maryland children have access to high-quality early childhood experiences regardless of their family's income. Reducing copays for Maryland's lowest income families and improving interagency coordination protects the financial stability of Maryland families and ensures that children continue to receive the developmental benefits of formal early education.

For these reasons, the Governor's Office for Children strongly supports HB 1321 and urges a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Andrea Barnes, Policy Advisor and Manager of Legislative Affairs at andrea.barnes@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Carmel Martin

Special Secretary, Governor's Office for Children and Senior Advisor to the Governor for Policy