

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) 849 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment - Exceptions and Waitlist - 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 849 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment - Exceptions and Waitlist. HB 849 ensures that Maryland's most vulnerable families retain access to the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program even during fiscal periods that necessitate enrollment freezes.

Stable, high quality childcare is a critical lever for economic mobility and allows for workforce participation and financial stability. HB 849 addresses a critical gap in the current child care infrastructure by supporting the State's most vulnerable households. The bill does this by prohibiting enrollment freezes for families experiencing the highest poverty; specifically, families experiencing homelessness or who are receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are exempt from the waitlist. Immediately, all children experiencing homelessness will be taken off the waitlist.

Further, the bill ensures that all children and families with the lowest incomes will be eligible and prioritized for the Child Care Scholarship. In the first year after this bill and corresponding HB 1321 are passed, more than 2,400 additional children will be served, including an additional 1,500 low-income children who will be provided a safe learning environment.

By establishing a prioritized waitlist that favors families with the greatest financial need and those with children under age three, HB 849 ensures that, even in light of the ongoing freeze, resources are directed where they can have the most immediate and profound impact.

The Office supports this bill because consistent child care allows families to join the workforce and achieve economic stability. For families in crisis, consistent child care leads can lead to consistent employment, breaking cycles of poverty.

For these reasons, the Governor's Office for Children strongly supports HB 849 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