



HB1321: Child Care Scholarship Program - Application Process and Copays – Alterations

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 25, 2026

POVERTY FREE MARYLAND

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Voting Member Agencies:

Anne Arundel County Food Bank

Baltimore Jewish Council

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Catholic Charities

Family League of Baltimore

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Poverty Free Maryland

Poverty Free Maryland envisions a Maryland without poverty, and a future where all Marylanders have the support and economic stability that's needed to thrive.

Affordable childcare is critically important for Maryland children and families. Childcare enables parents to pursue their careers knowing that their children are in good hands. Yet high costs put childcare out of reach for many Marylanders – and this barrier is more prevalent for some than others. Maryland has made significant progress in recent years in expanding access to its childcare scholarship program, which is a critical first step in addressing affordability.

The Childcare Scholarship (CCS) program is a cornerstone of childcare provision in Maryland, and it should be easily accessible to eligible families, fully funded, and expanded to increase access when possible. We recognize the difficult budget situation the state is facing, and that the CCS relies on a substantial investment of general fund dollars. Nevertheless, the current waitlist for CCS and capping enrollment at 40,000 children negatively impacts families, child care providers, and communities across the state.

As passed in the House, HB 1321 does not outline the co-pay structure in statute, which leaves families vulnerable to a future Administration implementing unaffordable co-pays that would make the program out-of-reach for many Marylanders. As such, we urge amendments that ensure co-pays are affordably tiered and outlined in statute.

We strongly support amending HB 1321 to place guardrails in statute that ensure the co-pay structure is affordably tiered for low-income households.

*Founded in 2025 through the merger of Welfare Advocates (established in 1979) and Marylanders Against Poverty (established in 1988), **Poverty Free Maryland** is a coalition of service providers, faith groups, and other organizations working together to exchange information, educate decisionmakers, and advocate for statewide public policies and programs necessary to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty and ensure that low-income Marylanders are provided with low- and no-barrier access to all resources needed to thrive and build a better life for the future.*

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