
TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 664 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Priority for Child Care Providers

DATE: March 4, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding SB 664 - Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program - Priority for Child Care Providers. This legislation requires MSDE to establish a framework to prioritize children of individuals who provide care for children in licensed child care centers, registered family child care homes, and registered large family child care homes for scholarships under the CCS Program, for applications received after July 1, 2026.

Maryland's early educators are critical to the State's economy; their work enables millions of parents to participate fully in the labor force, strengthens businesses, and fuels long-term economic growth. However, MSDE recognizes the challenge of prioritizing families for child care scholarships under current fiscal constraints.

While MSDE supports efforts to broaden access and serve more children, current funding limitations have necessitated a partial program freeze, reducing the CCS Program's capacity. Without a permanent and meaningful increase in appropriations, the mandates in SB 664 would lengthen existing waitlists and potentially lead to deficit spending. Further, it is difficult to estimate how many individuals in the proposed priority population would meet both the eligibility and need requirements of the CCS Program. There were an estimated 40,100 early care and education workers in Maryland in 2022. If all eligible families in this group were to apply, program costs could rise significantly. Determining the exact scope of need would require additional data collection and analysis to ensure an accurate and meaningful assessment, which could not be conducted with existing resources.

MSDE supports the goal of expanding access to child care for these essential providers and recognizes the importance of helping them balance work and family responsibilities. The Department welcomes the opportunity to explore future initiatives to support Maryland's child care workforce to strengthen the system and ensure continuity of care, contingent upon additional program funding.

The State Board and the Department request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **SB 664**. Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at Laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov if you would like any additional information.