

March 9, 2026



Testimony in Support of SB 672

Prince George's County – Expanding Access to Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Position: FAVORABLE

Submitted to: Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is **Rossana Espinoza-Thorndahl**, and I serve as the **Senior Director of the Latino Child Care Association of Maryland (LCAM)**. Our organization represents a **large and diverse network of Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers across the state of Maryland**, including many providers serving families in Prince George's County. I am honored to submit this testimony in **strong support of Senate Bill 672**, which calls for the development of an implementation and financing plan to expand access to high-quality early childhood education and child care for children from birth through age three.

High-quality child care is the foundation of a strong and equitable education system. The earliest years of life—birth to age three—are the most critical for brain development. During this period, children build the emotional, cognitive, and social skills that shape their long-term success in school and in life. If Maryland is committed to improving educational outcomes and strengthening its future workforce, investment must begin at the very start of a child's learning journey. Across our LCAM network, providers serve thousands of families who rely on safe, nurturing, and educational environments for their infants and toddlers. Many parents work long or nontraditional hours and depend on child care not only to maintain employment, but to ensure their children receive early learning experiences that prepare them for school readiness.

However, access to high-quality care remains a significant challenge. The current freeze on the Maryland Child Care Scholarship Program has made the situation even more difficult. Families who qualify for assistance cannot access it, and providers struggle to support parents who want to enroll but cannot afford the true cost of care. Without financial support, families are left with limited options.

Providers themselves face substantial barriers. Operating a child care program—whether a Family Child Care Home or a Center—has become increasingly expensive. Rising rent, insurance, materials, and staffing costs make it difficult for programs to remain sustainable. Additionally, navigating licensing, permitting, and regulatory requirements can be complex and costly. While these systems are essential for ensuring safety and quality, providers need stronger collaboration and support from state and local agencies to successfully meet these requirements.

Despite these challenges, LCAM providers remain deeply committed to serving children and families. They want to expand, improve their facilities, and increase capacity—but they cannot do it alone. The planning process outlined in SB 672 is essential. By examining the true cost of care, workforce needs, provider capacity, and long-term funding strategies, Maryland can build a thoughtful and sustainable plan to expand access for its youngest learners.

Children from birth to age three must not be overlooked. Investing in these early years strengthens families, communities, and Maryland's future workforce.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support SB 672 and take a meaningful step toward expanding access to high-quality early childhood education for the youngest children in Prince George's County and across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rossana Espinoza-Thorndahl Senior Director Latino Child Care Association of Maryland (LCAM)