



March 23, 2026

## Testimony in Support of House Bill 1321 – Child Care Scholarship Program Enrollment and Copays Alterations

**We respectfully urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1321 with an amendment.** The Child Care Scholarship (CCS) is a crucial support for many families in Montgomery County and across the state; the current enrollment freeze has hurt both families and child care providers.

We thank the General Assembly for considering adding more funding to the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program to serve more children on the waitlist – as, ultimately, we hope that enough funding could be appropriated to the program to lift the freeze entirely and that discussions of prioritizing the waitlist will no longer be needed. Until that time is possible, we are grateful for modifications that will allow the state to serve more vulnerable children and families through all available program options.

While we recognize that the re-introduction of co-pays is not an ideal situation for families living in poverty, we believe it is a creative solution that will allow the state to serve more families than would otherwise be possible. Given the great extent of the need, and the large numbers of eligible families not being served, we are in favor of alterations that allow more families to participate. It is important that the co-pays suggested stay below 7% of income.

We are working hard as a community in Montgomery County to build our mixed delivery system of Pre-Kindergarten programs, yet one large barrier we still face is family awareness of the opportunities available. We support the recommendation in HB 1321 that requires the State Department of Education to provide families on the CCS waitlist with information about other subsidized programs that they might be eligible for.

It is important to point out that this legislation should be a temporary solution to a deeply entrenched issue that still must be addressed. The child care system is built on a fundamentally flawed economic model, in which the true costs of providing quality services are more than parents are able to pay. The federal government recommends that, for it to be considered affordable, families should spend 7% of their income on child care. This would mean *a family of an infant in Montgomery County would need to make at more than \$450,00 annually to “afford” center-based care.* Child care affordability is a problem faced by the majority of Marylanders, not just those in the low-income households currently eligible for the Child Care Scholarship Program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

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The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](https://www.mocochildren.org) connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts all young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

