



Testimony - HB 849, Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment -  
Exceptions  
Favorable  
House Ways & Means Committee  
March 4, 2026  
Elly Cowan on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Wilkins & Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents more than 20,000 education workers and public employees across Maryland, including family childcare providers and strongly supports House Bill 849, which establishes critical protections for vulnerable families in the event of a freeze in enrollment in the Child Care Scholarship Program.

Child care assistance is not a luxury — it is the infrastructure that allows working families to participate in the workforce and keep Maryland’s economy running. When enrollment freezes occur, the families most in need are often the first to suffer. House Bill 849 ensures that essential protections remain in place.

This bill thoughtfully safeguards access to child care scholarships for families enrolled in Temporary Cash Assistance and federal TANF programs, children receiving Supplemental Security Income, and siblings of children already enrolled in the Program. These provisions recognize that stability in child care is essential for child development and family economic security.

Importantly, the bill also protects workers facing sudden job loss or involuntary furlough due to government shutdowns. Families should not lose access to child care assistance because of circumstances beyond their control. Allowing recently unemployed individuals to maintain eligibility ensures they can search for work and return to employment quickly.

We are particularly supportive of the inclusion of child care workers themselves. Individuals employed by child care centers and family child care homes are foundational to Maryland's early childhood system. Protecting their access to the Program strengthens workforce retention and supports a sector already facing staffing challenges.

House Bill 849 strikes an appropriate balance. It preserves the State's ability to manage fiscal constraints while ensuring that the most vulnerable families, critical workers, and children with disabilities are not shut out of care.

SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 849. We would like to thank Delegate Mireku-North for her leadership on this important issue and all the delegates who have stepped up to co-sponsor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.