



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 4, 2026

HB 849

Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment - Exceptions

**House Ways & Means Committee
House Appropriations Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 849. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. The Maryland Catholic Conference also offers this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by more than 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

House Bill 849 would roll back the enrollment freeze for the Child Care Scholarship Program for limited classes of participants. Those would include those receiving temporary assistance, those very recently unemployed, those whose child has a sibling already enrolled in the program, and individuals who have recently lost public service employment.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has supported proposals seeking to "expand assistance to parents with children and improve family formation and stability." (*Letter to Congress on Child Tax Credit*, USCCB, 2016). In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace asserted that all persons deserve "a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently... There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members..."

Child Care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families and thus the Church supports this bill as a part of its priority interest in alleviating poverty. Enabling parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services, and for none other than those experiencing unforeseen hardships is that more true. Please support Child Care Scholarship continuity through a favorable report on House Bill 849.