



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

**Testimony in Support of HB 849**  
**"Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment - Exceptions"**  
**Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee**  
**March 2, 2026**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEOYC) supports HB 849, which would create exceptions to the Child Care Scholarship Program enrollment freeze for Maryland's most vulnerable families and for child care providers.

MDAEOYC is a professional association of 1,700 early childhood educators, allied professionals, and families. We promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood education practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

We support HB 849 because the current Child Care Scholarship enrollment freeze, in effect since May 2025, has created a waitlist of over 3,000 children. This legislation would protect Maryland's most vulnerable families by ensuring that those enrolled in Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can continue to access child care scholarships even during the freeze. These families—who are experiencing poverty or caring for children with disabilities—need stable child care to maintain employment, access services, and support their children's development. Exempting them from the freeze is both an equity imperative and a practical necessity.

We also support the bill's provision allowing siblings of children already enrolled in the scholarship program to access scholarships during the freeze. Keeping siblings together in the same child care program reduces logistical burdens on families, maintains continuity for children, and reduces administrative complexity for both families and providers.

We also strongly support exempting child care providers from the enrollment freeze. Maryland's child care providers earn an average of just \$34,000 per year and often cannot afford care for their own children. When providers leave the field because they cannot access affordable child care, Maryland loses child care capacity that other families depend on. Supporting providers to access scholarships for their own children is a strategic workforce retention investment that helps maintain system capacity for all families.

For these reasons, MDAEOYC supports HB 849 and respectfully requests a favorable report.

*If you have any questions, please contact: Stephanie Schaefer, PhD., at [stephanie.schaefer@mdaeyc.org](mailto:stephanie.schaefer@mdaeyc.org) or 240-441-3280.*