



March 2, 2026

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Maryland State Senate 2 West Miller Senate Office Building 11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Testimony in Support of HB 849 – Child Care Scholarship Program – Freeze in Enrollment – Exceptions**

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)**. I am writing to express my strong support for **HB 849**, which would create essential exceptions to the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) waitlist.

LCAM represents a large network of family child care providers across Maryland, many of whom serve immigrant, bilingual, and low-income families. These providers are often the first point of contact for families seeking stability, early learning opportunities, and culturally responsive care. The CCS waitlist has placed tremendous strain on these families and on the providers who support them.

Families in our community frequently work essential jobs with long or irregular hours. When they are placed on the CCS waitlist, they face difficult choices—reducing work hours, leaving employment, or relying on unsafe or unstable care arrangements. For Spanish-speaking and immigrant families, navigating the system is already challenging, and long delays only deepen inequities.

The waitlist also destabilizes small family child care programs. Providers often hold a spot for a child who is waiting for scholarship approval because they understand the family's need. However, doing so results in financial loss and threatens the sustainability of programs that are vital to Maryland's child care infrastructure.

**HB 849 offers a fair and practical solution.** By allowing exceptions for families facing urgent circumstances—such as safety concerns, developmental or language needs, or situations where child care is essential for maintaining employment—this bill ensures that the most vulnerable children are not left behind. Early access to care is especially critical for multilingual children, whose developmental and language needs must be supported without delay.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support **HB 849**. This legislation will strengthen families, stabilize providers, and promote equity across Maryland's early childhood system. It is a necessary step toward ensuring that all children—regardless of language, income, or background—have access to the care and opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to Maryland's children and families.

Sincerely,

  
**Rossana Espinoza-Thorndahl**

Senior Director Latino Child Care Association of Maryland (LCAM)