



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*House Bill 849 – Child Care Scholarship Program - Freeze in Enrollment – Exceptions*

**Ways and Means Committee  
March 4, 2026**

**SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is James Torrence, Executive Director of the Maryland Alliance of YMCAs, which represents six independent YMCA associations serving children and families across Maryland. Collectively, our Ys **serve 421,346 Marylanders** from early childhood through older adulthood.

Maryland Ys and Y-affiliated programs operate across **12 jurisdictions**, providing safe, stable, and affordable care that supports working families and children’s development throughout the state. This footprint reflects sustained investment in quality programs and the Y’s role as a trusted provider, with **more than 130 Maryland EXCELS-licensed childcare and Head Start programs**. In addition, Ys **partner with 200 local schools and leads 28 community schools**, supporting student success through wraparound services, enrichment, mentorship and family engagement. **More than 52,000 children** are served annually through Y childcare, afterschool, and summer programs.

The Y is one of Maryland’s largest childcare providers. We see firsthand how critical the Child Care Scholarship Program is to working families and to the stability of the childcare sector. HB 849 establishes reasonable, targeted protections to ensure that, even during a freeze in enrollment, the most vulnerable families and essential workers are not locked out of care.

Specifically, the bill protects:

- Families receiving Temporary Assistance or Supplemental Security Income,
- Siblings of children already enrolled, ensuring continuity of care,
- Individuals who have recently lost employment,
- Workers impacted by government shutdowns, and
- Childcare employees themselves.

These protections matter to our families and communities.

Continuity of care supports healthy child development and prevents disruption for working parents. Allowing siblings to enroll together keeps families stable and avoids unnecessary hardship. Protecting recently unemployed or furloughed workers ensures that childcare remains a bridge back to employment, not a barrier.

Importantly, extending protections to childcare employees helps address workforce retention. Early childhood educators cannot remain in the field if they cannot afford care for their own children. Supporting them strengthens Maryland’s entire childcare system.

HB 849 strikes the right balance. It preserves the State’s ability to manage fiscal pressures while safeguarding access for families who need it most and for the workforce that depends on reliable childcare.

For these reasons, the Maryland Alliance of YMCAs respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 849.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Point of Contact**

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