



March 2, 2026

## Testimony in Support of House Bill 849 – Child Care Scholarship Program Freeze in Enrollment Exceptions

**We respectfully urge the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 849 with amendments.** The Child Care Scholarship Program is one of Maryland's most important tools for supporting working families, strengthening our economy, and sustaining a stable child care workforce. Like any good tool, it can be adapted to address newly occurring needs during unprecedented times.

We are living in unprecedented times, particularly in Montgomery County. Over the last year, we have heard from many families and child care providers about the great disruptions happening in our community, due to high numbers of federal workers becoming unemployed or impacted by furloughs. One child care center along Colesville Road, a major artery into the District, reported that they lost 30% of their families in the spring due to federal employment changes. This caused incredible instability for the child care center, threatening the care received by the other families enrolled at this location. We are grateful to the Delegates for their attention to these individuals impacted by federal changes who are in need of support and attention at this time.

We suggest one amendment to the legislation. Instead of making the individuals described in section VI (page 4 row 6) exempt from the enrollment freeze, we suggest these individuals are simply made eligible for Child Care Scholarship – as they are not currently eligible – but they are not given priority over other families also eligible and sitting on the waitlist. We believe that families with the lowest incomes and the youngest children should be prioritized and would not prioritize recently unemployed federal workers over these groups.

HB 849 also includes a prioritization of individuals who are employed by child care centers or family child care homes, also known as categorical eligibility for early childhood educators. We strongly agree with this element of the legislation, as we see this as a critical step towards supporting the early childhood workforce, which is severely undercompensated and facing a critical shortage. This policy would help stabilize the workforce, reduce barriers to employment, and send a clear message that Maryland values the professionals who make it possible for families across the state to work.

Ultimately, we would hope that more funding could be appropriated to the Child Care Scholarship program to lift the freeze entirely and that discussions of prioritizing the waitlist will no longer be needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

Laura Jahromi, Manager, Strategic Initiatives  
The Montgomery County Children's Opportunity Alliance  
1801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 | 301-450-1871 |  
[laura@mocochildren.org](mailto:laura@mocochildren.org)

The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](https://www.mocochildren.org) connects our community to build an equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts all young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.