

Chairperson, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding House Bill 0849.

As written, HB0849 establishes categories of individuals who would be exempt from the enrollment freeze. We strongly support the proposed exemption for child care workers. Ensuring that early educators have timely access to child care financial assistance is essential for maintaining a stable workforce in a sector that is already experiencing serious staffing shortages. This exemption recognizes the critical role child care workers play in Maryland's economy and the importance of supporting those who care for our youngest learners.

However, we respectfully raise concerns regarding the additional exemptions for recently unemployed or furloughed federal and state workers. Maryland's child care scholarship system is already under significant strain. The enrollment freeze, enacted in May 2025, has created a waitlist for over 5,000 families. While we understand the intention to support families experiencing sudden employment disruptions, expanding exemptions in this way would inevitably lengthen the waitlist for all other working families who do not qualify for these carve-outs.

We encourage the legislature to consider the long-term implications of expanding exemptions beyond the early childhood workforce. Targeting limited resources in a way that protects access for the workers who sustain the child care system itself is a vital step. At the same time, preserving fairness and timely access for other working families should remain a central priority.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to strengthening Maryland's child care system. We stand ready to support efforts that both stabilize the early childhood workforce and ensure equitable access to scholarships for the families who need them most.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Molly McGriff
Senior Director, Untied for Childcare

United Way of Central Maryland

(410) 895-1383, molly.mcgriff@uwcm.org