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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Thursday, March 5, 2026

To: Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair

Delegate Jessica Feldmark, Vice Chair

Ways and Means Committee

The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express its support for **HB 849 – Child Care Scholarship Program – Freeze in Enrollment Exceptions.**

HB 849 establishes important exceptions to enrollment freezes within the Child Care Scholarship Program. This legislation is a critical safeguard that will help ensure Maryland's most vulnerable families are not left without access to the child care services they depend on.

HB 849 identifies specific families who would be exempt from placement on a waiting list during a program freeze. These include families enrolled in Temporary Cash Assistance or the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, as well as children and their siblings who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). By codifying these exemptions into law, the legislation provides long-term stability and financial relief for families who are already facing significant economic challenges. It ensures that these households are protected from the consequences of unexpected enrollment freezes within the Child Care Scholarship Program.

Importantly, HB 849 also provides protections for individuals experiencing sudden and unexpected employment disruptions. The bill exempts individuals who have become unemployed within the past thirty days, as well as federal, state, or local government employees who have been involuntarily furloughed without pay due to a government shutdown lasting more than seven consecutive days. Access to affordable child care during periods of employment instability is critical, as it allows parents to focus on securing new employment and maintaining financial stability for their families.

HB 849 also supports Maryland's child care workforce by extending these exemptions to employees of child care centers and family child care homes. In addition, the legislation benefits small business child care providers by helping ensure a stable number of children remain eligible for the Child Care Scholarship Program, thereby supporting the broader child care economy in Maryland.

This important legislation provides meaningful support to hardworking Maryland parents who may not be able to absorb the unexpected costs that arise when access to the Child Care Scholarship Program is interrupted.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus respectfully urges a **favorable report on HB 849.**