



## **HB1559: Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations (Child Care for Working Families Act)**

Presented to the Honorable Maggie McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee

March 10, 2020, 1:00pm

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### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Appropriations Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB1559: Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations (Child Care for Working Families Act)**, sponsored by Delegate Pam Queen.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights and justice. The need for families and children to have access to adequate and affordable child care is critical to their financial and familial well-being. Lower income families and single parent households often have limited choices for child care providers solely based on prohibitive costs. Revising eligibility requirements to ensure that working families have the ability to afford quality child care will create better financial, child development, and health outcomes. All Maryland families should be able to have access to child care that will allow for better opportunities and quality of life. Accessing financial assistance for child care needs to be a pathway and not a barrier to families across the state.

The current Child Care Scholarship program in Maryland provides much needed financial assistance for families to pay for child care, however, there are many who do not qualify who need the assistance. Researchers have noted that stable childcare can attribute to positive child outcomes, such as positive cognitive and social-emotional development, and overall child well-being.<sup>i</sup> Families should not have to choose between their children and working in order to make ends meet. The annual average cost of child care in Maryland is \$10,254 making it the 7<sup>th</sup> most expensive in the country.<sup>ii</sup> These costs only increase for lower income families as a minimum wage worker would need to work 38 weeks full time to cover the cost of child care for one infant.<sup>iii</sup> These high costs make it financially difficult for families of all backgrounds to have access to quality child care. The need to expand access to more families to obtain a subsidy for child care is critical in ensuring that their basic needs are met.

This bill would expand the amount of families that qualify for a child care scholarship and allow for more children to receive quality child care. The bill shifts eligibility requirements so that more families, especially those considered lower income, will qualify for scholarships. The bill also provides standards for children to remain eligible for the scholarship 12 months and that exemptions for copayment for child care are allowed under certain circumstances. The need to ensure that all Maryland families have access to the resources in order to obtain quality child care is paramount. Maryland's families should not have to choose between their children and work or school in trying to be a successful member of society. For these reasons, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable committee report on HB1559.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>i</sup> [Shaw, S.H., Partika, A., & Tout, K. \(2019\). Child Care Subsidy Stability Literature Review. OPRE Research Brief # 2019-17. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.](#)

<sup>ii</sup> [Economic Policy Institute, The cost of child care in Maryland, July 2019](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [Ibid](#)