



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

2026 Maryland Legislative Session Wrap-Up

MDAEYC Advocacy Meeting | April 30, 2026

An Affiliate of **naeyc**

Today's Agenda

- Session Context
- Budget Wins
- Bills That Passed
- Bills That Did Not Pass
- Immigration Update
 - MDAEYC's Position
- What This Means for Us
- Next Steps & Get Involved

Session Context: The 2026 Maryland Legislative Session

- Maryland's 90-day legislative session sets direction for state programs -- including child care and early education
- This year lawmakers faced a \$1.2 billion budget shortfall -- meaning less appetite for big new spending
- Despite that, early childhood advocates secured real wins
- All 188 General Assembly seats are on the ballot in November 2026 -- making this a prime year to build relationships with legislators

Key Bills That Passed

- HB 561 / SB 467 -- Child Care Credential Program extended; \$5.7M in FY27 budget
- HB 742 / SB 503 -- GO FCC reauthorized; \$450K secured through FY 2030
- HB 1321 -- CCS application process improved; family copays capped at 7% of income
- HB 849 -- Codifies exceptions to CCS enrollment freeze, including for providers' own children
- HB 748 -- Pre-K career ladder made permanent for community-based providers
- HB 635 / SB 359 -- Background check process streamlined; faster hiring

Bills That Passed ✓

Bill	What It Does	Funding
HB 561 / SB 467	Extends the Child Care Credential Program, which gives bonuses to child care workers based on their education level. Keeps this important workforce support in place.	\$5.7M in FY27 budget
HB 742 / SB 503	Funds the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program (GO FCC), which helps new family child care providers get started with grants, mentoring, and technical support. Since 2022, the program has supported 278 new providers and roughly 2,000 new child care slots. This session secured a \$450K appropriation to continue the program through FY 2030.	\$450K appropriation through FY 2030
HB 1321	Makes the Child Care Scholarship (subsidy) application process clearer for families. Also ensures that families using scholarships are never asked to pay more than 7% of their income toward child care.	\$20M added to CCS in FY27 budget
HB 849 (+HB 910 / SB 664)	Clarifies the rules for who can get off the Child Care Scholarship waitlist early, including exceptions for child care workers' own children. Makes the enrollment process more predictable for providers and families.	Part of CCS funding above

Bills That Passed ✓

Bill	What It Does	Funding
HB 748	Makes permanent the career ladder for Pre-K teachers working in community-based programs (not just public schools). Helps keep experienced teachers in the field.	\$10M for Pre-K expansion in FY27 budget
HB 635 / SB 359 + HB 281	Updates the rules for criminal background checks for child care staff, making the process faster and clearer. Helps programs hire people more quickly.	No new funding; operational change
HB 430	Allows family child care providers who also serve in the military reserves to use a substitute provider while they are on duty, so they do not have to close their program.	No new funding; policy change

Budget Wins: What Got Funded

- \$20 million added to the Child Care Scholarship Program -- est. 3,800 children off the waitlist by next year
- \$10 million for the Pre-K expansion grant program (community-based Pre-K seats)
- \$5.7 million for the Child Care Credential Program (bonuses for workers who earn education credentials)
- \$450K for GO FCC (Growing Family Child Care Opportunities) secured through FY 2030 -- 278 new providers and ~2,000 slots since 2022

Bills That Did Not Pass

- Bills we monitored or supported that will carry into 2027

Bills That Did Not Pass

Bill	What It Would Have Done
HB 1574	Would have updated licensing rules for child care programs, including how complaints are handled, training timelines, and background check coordination. Also addressed what happens when programs get repeat violations -- currently they can lose Pre-K funding eligibility. Passed the House but stalled in the Senate. MDAEYC will continue to monitor.
HB 1259	Would have limited the ability of local governments to use zoning rules to block family child care homes. Some counties have spacing requirements or local approval processes that make it hard to operate. Did not pass this session; statewide conversation is ongoing.
HB 539	Would have changed the qualifications required to work as a teacher in a child care center, opening up more pathways into the field. Did not advance this session.
HB 662	Would have lowered the minimum age for a lead teacher from 19 to 18, if the person had one year of experience and completed a 90-hour course. Did not pass this session.
HB 1034	Would have added child abuse and neglect prevention training to the list of required trainings for child care providers. Did not pass this session.
SB 672	Would have expanded early childhood access in Prince George's County. Did not pass this session.

Bills We Are Watching for 2027

- HB 1574 -- Licensing modernization (passed House, stalled in Senate). How violations affect EXCELS/Pre-K funding still unresolved. MDAEYC will monitor.
- HB 1259 -- Would have limited local zoning barriers blocking family child care homes. Did not pass; conversation ongoing.
- HB 539 -- Would have expanded teacher qualification pathways in child care centers. Did not advance.
- HB 662 -- Would have lowered lead teacher minimum age from 19 to 18. Did not pass.

Immigration: Why We Are Paying Attention

Not traditionally our issue -- but it affects our children, families, and workforce

MDAEYC's Position on Immigration

- Protect the safety and well-being of children, families, and educators affected by immigration enforcement.
- *MDAEYC takes no position on immigration policy generally and affirms that enforcement of immigration laws must be conducted lawfully and constitutionally. We do oppose recent enforcement practices that expose young children to traumatic experiences and create fear that can prevent families and educators from accessing and providing early childhood programs and services. These practices destabilize Maryland's early childhood workforce and undermine the safe, stable environments that all young children need to thrive.*

What Passed in Maryland on Immigration

- Community Trust Act -- Local law enforcement cannot hold people for ICE without a judge-signed warrant
- Data Privacy Act -- State agencies cannot share school enrollment data, benefit applications, or personal records for immigration enforcement. Families can access services with less fear.
- 287(g) ban -- Permanently ends local law enforcement from acting as ICE deputies; signed as emergency law in February 2026
- For ECE: families can now enroll children and apply for child care subsidies without their information being used against them

What the 2026 Session Means for Our Community

- Credential bonuses are safe -- for now. The Child Care Credential Program is funded through FY27; workers earning credentials can count on these bonuses.
- The scholarship freeze continues, but improved. 3,800 children estimated off the waitlist by next year. Copay cap at 7% of income protects families.
- Licensing reform is unfinished. HB 1574 passed the House but stalled. EXCELS/Pre-K funding questions unresolved. MDAEYC monitoring.
- Family child care got a boost. GO FCC secured through FY 2030. But zoning barriers remain in some counties.
- Election year = opportunity. All 188 seats on ballot. Now is the time to connect with your legislators.

Next Steps & Get Involved

- Monitor CCS changes and credential program rollout
- Track HB 1574 interim workgroup on licensing modernization
- Build relationships with legislators -- especially new ones after November elections
- Help with events -- staff a table at ECE convenings
- Connect with your legislators -- share your story
- Host a program visit -- invite legislators to see your program (MDAEYC can help)
- Electoral advocacy (nonpartisan) -- help register voters at ECE programs



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Thank You!

We look forward to your Partnership!

