

Growing Family Child Care Opportunities (GOFCC)

Educational Article, Section 9.5-114(i)

Division of Early Childhood

December 2025



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December 1, 2025

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor
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The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House
H-101 State House
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The Honorable Bill Ferguson
Senate President
H-107 State House
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Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program MSAR #15481, ED § 9.5-114(i)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

The Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Program authorizes Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide grants to local jurisdictions or child care licensing regions to increase the supply and ensure the sustainability of family child care providers in areas with above average rates of poverty and unemployment. MSDE is required to report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2021, and each year thereafter, on the status of the Program and an evaluation of local programs. Please find attached the report for December 1, 2025.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director, Governmental Affairs, Education Policy, and External Relations by email at Laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov or by telephone at 443-571-5461.

Sincerely,



Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

c: Sarah Albert, Mandated Reports Specialist, Department of Legislative Services (five copies)

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Framework and Impact of GOFCC

The Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC) program, launched in 2021, was created to address the sharp decline in family child care (FCC) providers. Between 2017 and 2021, nearly 8,000 FCC homes closed nationally, with Maryland experiencing some of the steepest losses.¹ Given this decline GOFCC was designed to recruit, train, and support individuals to open and sustain licensed FCC programs, while equipping them with the business knowledge and resources necessary for long-term success.

In its first two years of operation, Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024, GOFCC demonstrated measurable impact. Across five Child Care Resource Centers (CCRC), the program recruited over 340 prospective FCC providers, delivered tailored training and coaching, and helped 172 providers successfully open new programs. This translated into more than 700 new child care spaces statewide. GOFCC participants also engaged in Maryland EXCELS and the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program at higher-than-average rates, reinforcing both quality and financial stability for families and providers alike.

The program's effectiveness was underscored in the 2024 legislative session. A key committee briefing organized by Maryland Family Network (MFN) highlighted GOFCC's results and documented its role in stabilizing FCC supply at a time when projections warned of collapse. As a result, the General Assembly secured two additional years of funding, ensuring the program's continued support for new and emerging FCC providers across the state.

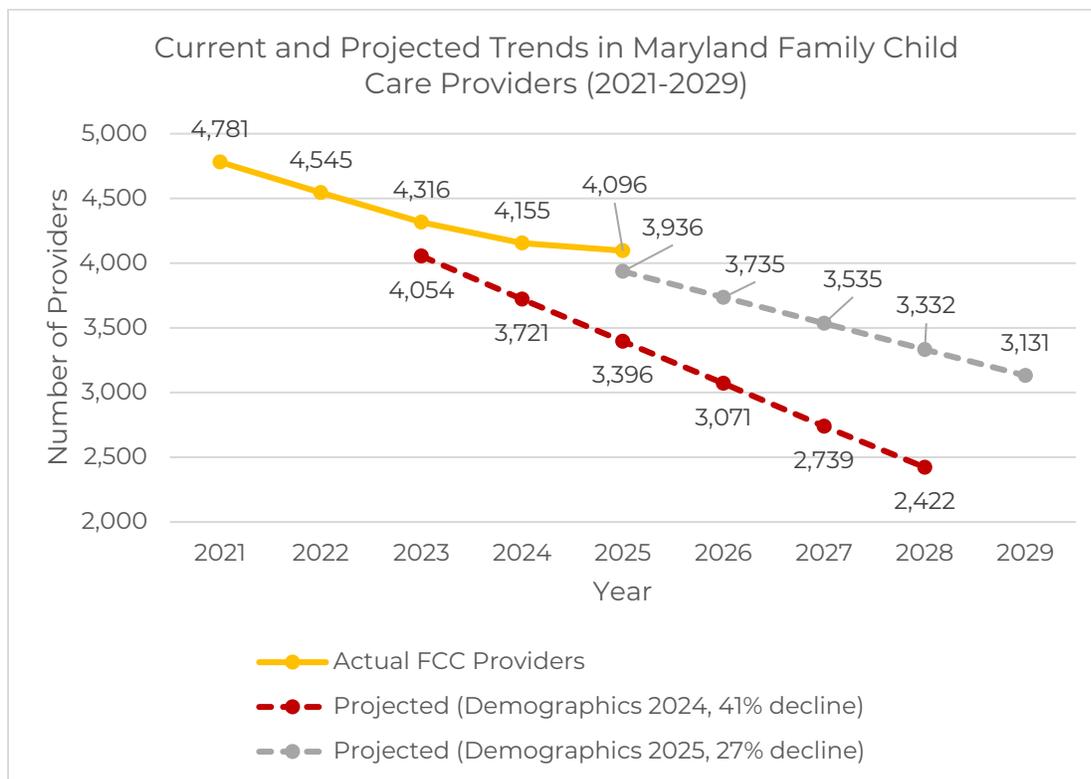
Independent analysis by Child Trends further affirmed these outcomes, noting that GOFCC's structured model and emphasis on business capacity-building positioned it as a promising strategy for strengthening Maryland's family child care sector.

¹ Child Care Aware of America. (2022). The U.S. and the high price of child care: An examination of a broken system. Retrieved from <https://www.childcareaware.org>

Current Trends and Continued Urgency

According to MFN's *Demographics of Child Care in Maryland, 2024* report, projections indicated a potential 41% reduction in family childcare providers by 2025.² The 2025 Demographics report later revised this projection to 27%.³ Neither forecast has materialized. The Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Licensing Statistics show 4,110 providers as of June 2024 and 4,096 as of June 2025, remaining above the projected 2025 level of 3,936.⁴ The most significant losses occurred between 2021 and 2023, before GOFCC participants began reaching licensure at scale. Following statewide implementation in FY24 and FY25, the annual rate of decline slowed sharply. This stabilization coincided with implementation of GOFCC, suggesting the program has been a critical factor in slowing the decline of family child care providers.

Figure 1: Current and Projected Trends 2021-2029



Note: The GOFCC pilot began September 2022. GOFCC was implemented FY 24-FY 25.

² Maryland Family Network. (2024). Trends 2024: A snapshot of Maryland’s children and families. Maryland Family Network. <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/trends2024%20final.pdf>

³ Maryland Family Network. Demographics of Child Care in Maryland, 2025. July 2025. Available at: https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/MFN_Demographics_2025_2.pdf

⁴ Maryland State Department of Education. Licensing Statistics. Available at: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/data>

FY 2025 Implementation Highlights

Maryland continues to face a fragile child care market where the loss of family child care providers directly threatens access, affordability, and workforce participation. GOFCC was created to change that trajectory.

Entering FY 2025, MFN, working in partnership with five Child Care Resource Centers (Abilities Network Project ACT, The Baltimore Child Care Resource Center at The Family Tree, Child Resource Connect, Child Care Choices at the Mental Health Association of Frederick County, and the Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center at Salisbury University), established four clear outcomes to measure progress and accountability of GOFCC:

- **Broaden participation** by increasing outreach to a wide range of communities through collaboration with trusted local organizations.
- **Expand licensing growth** by raising the number of new family child care licenses issued compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Strengthen financial stability** by embedding business training and operational supports for both new and existing providers.
- **Advance quality and systems participation** by ensuring that a majority of newly licensed programs enroll in Maryland EXCELS within six months and access the CCS Program.

In its third year of operation, GOFCC also incorporated findings from the Child Trends evaluation, interest holder surveys, and focus group feedback. This ongoing cycle of reflection and adaptation reinforced the program's core logic: recruiting and supporting family child care providers through responsive outreach, business training, and access to quality resources strengthens both supply and sustainability.

This approach is building a thriving family child care sector that expands access to high-quality early childhood education for families, enhances economic stability for providers, and strengthens local communities. The results in FY 2025 demonstrate this impact. GOFCC operated across eighteen counties and Baltimore City, worked with 260 prospective business owners, and opened sixty-three new programs, accounting for one-third of all family child care openings in participating jurisdictions. In some areas, including Dorchester, Garrett, and Kent counties, every new program was established through GOFCC. Baltimore City recorded more than half of all new openings through GOFCC. In Western Maryland, sixteen of the thirty-three new family child care programs established in FY 2025 were the result of this program.

In total since its launch, GOFCC has assisted 235 new child care programs achieve licensure, creating 1,673 new spaces for children, including 377 infant spaces. The program has also accelerated quality engagement, with 76% of GOFCC-licensed providers participating in Maryland EXCELS compared to a statewide average of 64%.⁵ Retention has proven strong as well: nearly all licensed programs remain active at six months, 93% at one year, and 86% at eighteen months.

Table 1: GOFCC FY 2025 Participation and Outcomes by County

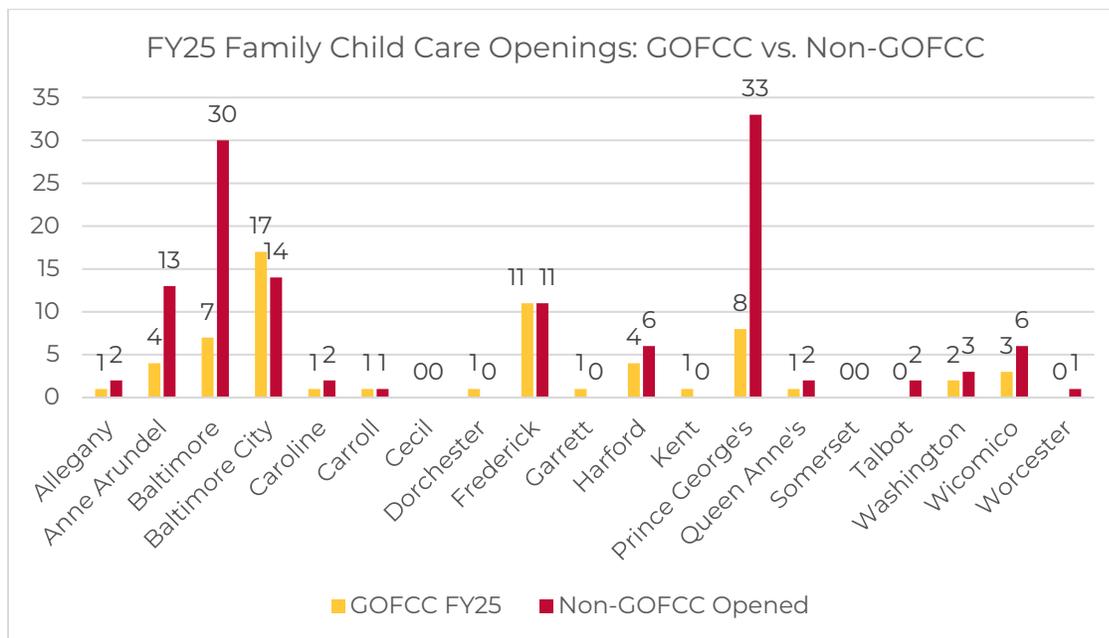
County	Licensed Programs	Capacity Created	Current Active Participants	Potential Capacity
Baltimore	7	48	14	112
Cecil	0	0	0	0
Harford	4	29	3	24
Baltimore City	17	115	15	120
Allegany	1	8	1	8
Carroll	1	8	2	16
Frederick	11	77	11	88
Garrett	1	7	1	8
Washington	2	13	7	56
Anne Arundel	4	26	3	24
Prince George's	8	57	15	120
Caroline	1	8	1	8
Dorchester	1	7	2	16
Kent	1	6	0	0
Queen Anne's	1	7	0	0

⁵ Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland EXCELS Monthly Data Report, July 2025. Available at: https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/19/july2025_monthly_data_acc.pdf

County	Licensed Programs	Capacity Created	Current Active Participants	Potential Capacity
Somerset	0	0	1	8
Talbot	0	0	0	0
Wicomico	3	21	1	8
Worcester	0	0	1	8
Total	63	437	78	624

Note: Licensed Programs reflect the number of providers who achieved licensure in FY 2025. Capacity Created indicates the child care spaces generated by those programs. Current Active Participants are candidates still progressing through the licensing process as of June 30, 2025. Potential Capacity represents the estimated number of additional slots that could be created if all current participants become licensed.

Figure 2: Growth in New Family Child Care Programs Through GOFCC



Note: This chart shows the number of newly licensed family child care programs in FY 2025, with blue bars representing those opened through GOFCC. Percentages indicate GOFCC's share of new openings in each county.

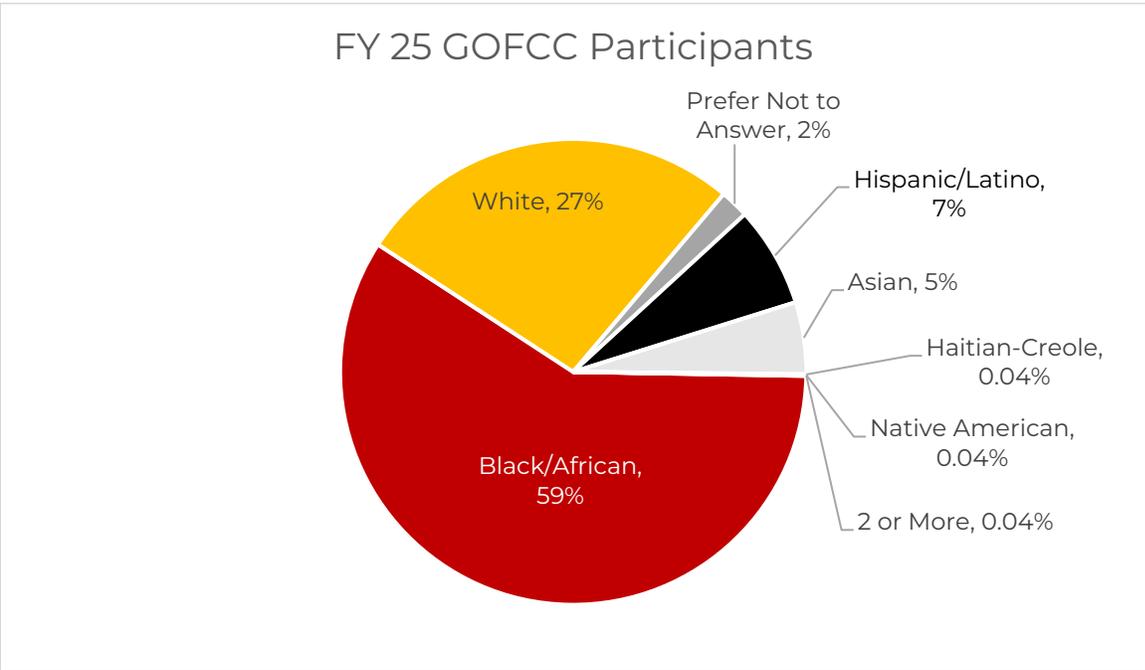
FY25 IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES

In FY 2025, MFN in collaboration with five CCRCs advanced GOFCC's four priority outcomes with measurable results. Despite operating on a shortened fiscal year as the program aligned with the state calendar, progress was evident across each area.

Increased Community Representative Participation

GOFCC’s outreach strategy is designed to reduce barriers and expand participation, with coordinators using clear and effective communication methods to engage communities that have traditionally had limited involvement in the child care system. The Child Trends implementation study noted that GOFCC’s design, which links individualized coaching with community partnerships, helped participants feel recognized and supported, especially those navigating licensing in a language other than English. MFN also leveraged its relationships with community organizations across the state to identify effective strategies for engaging and assisting prospective providers, ensuring outreach efforts were grounded in the needs and strengths of the communities they aimed to serve. Coordinators emphasized that trust built through bilingual communication and local partnerships expanded entry into the program. In FY 2025, approximately 75% of participants came from a variety of backgrounds, highlighting how these intentional strategies are reshaping the composition of Maryland’s family child care workforce.

Figure 3: FY 25 GOFCC Participant Demographics by Race/ Ethnicity



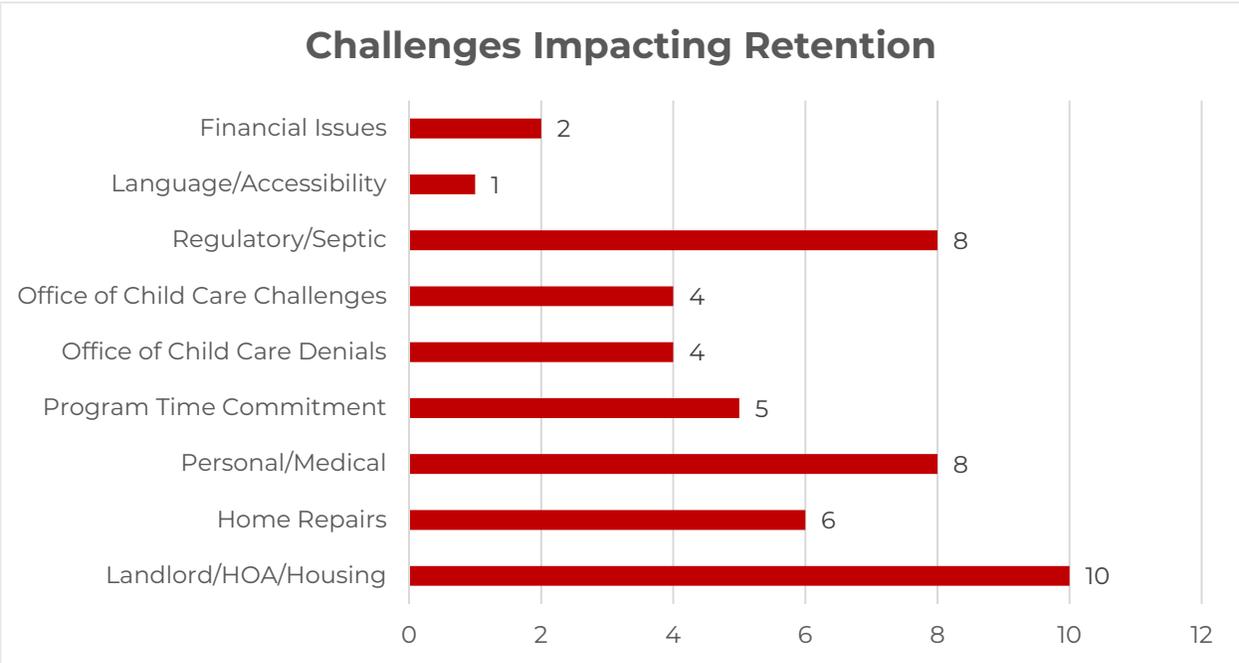
Licensing Growth

At its core, GOFCC exists to increase the supply of child care by helping prospective providers navigate Maryland’s licensing process, a pathway often described as confusing, lengthy, and discouraging. Prospective providers regularly encounter hurdles such as securing landlord or homeowner’s association approvals, completing costly, time-consuming, and required home repairs, and balancing licensing requirements with the day-to-day responsibilities of working full time. The Child Trends evaluation confirmed what many already knew: without structured support, many candidates abandon the process before reaching licensure.

Participants themselves credit the GOFCC program with transforming what felt like an insurmountable process into an achievable goal. As one provider noted, “Without the coaching, I would have given up. It’s too much paperwork and too many steps to figure out alone.” The Child Trends evaluation further highlighted that GOFCC coordinators act not only as motivators but also as navigators, providing clear timelines, reminders, and troubleshooting when delays occur. Another participant shared, “They made the licensing process feel doable.”

This impact has not come without strain. With the loss of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, CCRCs went from having one or more staff dedicated exclusively to GOFCC, to operating with either a single coordinator or staff who must balance GOFCC alongside other responsibilities. This shift, combined with the transition of new staff, and the time required to rebuild participant relationships, placed added pressure on service delivery. Even so, CCRCs worked to sustain consistent, high-quality support. By embedding structured, personalized guidance, GOFCC has turned common barriers into achievable milestones. This approach has not only increased the number of programs opening but has also strengthened the foundation on which new providers build their businesses. As FY 2025 concluded, CCRCs were actively supporting seventy-eight participants still progressing through the pathway, including twenty-nine with licenses pending approval, evidence that the pipeline for new family child care programs remains strong heading into FY 2026.

Figure 4 Challenges Impacting Retention



Business Stability and Capacity Building

A core strength of GOFCC is its recognition that family child care programs are not only early learning environments but also small businesses. Building providers’ understanding of business operations is vital to their long-term success and is what distinguishes GOFCC from other early childhood workforce initiatives.

FY25 marked an important year of refinement for the GOFCC Business Foundations Series. With coaches now carrying a full year of experience delivering the series, MFN worked with them to evaluate and strengthen the curriculum. Templates and tools were created to reinforce lessons on budgeting, cash flow analysis, and file organization, while real-world case scenarios were incorporated to deepen participants' practical learning.

In parallel, the CCRCs continued to engage veteran providers through the All Our Kin Family Child Care Business Training Series, where participants reported an average 58% increase in business knowledge by course completion.

To broaden operational support, MFN coordinated a quarterly Lunch and Learn series with shared services partner Brightwheel. Sessions focused on billing and tuition collection, expense tracking, and tax preparation using Brightwheel's child care management software. Two additional webinars, led by external experts, addressed specialized topics including Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) reporting for LLCs and preparing small businesses for tax season.

Quality and Systems Engagement

Strengthening program quality and connecting providers to statewide systems are essential to building a sustainable family child care sector. In FY 2025, GOFCC continued to prioritize Maryland EXCELS and the CCS program as the two most critical levers for ensuring quality and affordability.

Among newly licensed GOFCC providers, 76% enrolled in Maryland EXCELS compared to a statewide average of 64%, signaling that providers supported through the program are entering the field better prepared to meet quality standards. GOFCC Coordinators worked directly with providers to complete Maryland EXCELS applications, interpret standards, and connect them to training aligned with improvement goals.

With consideration for affordability, GOFCC helped new providers navigate the CCS Program, ensuring more families could access care regardless of income. By linking quality initiatives with financial support systems, GOFCC reinforced its dual mission of strengthening provider stability and expanding access to high-quality early care and education for Maryland families.

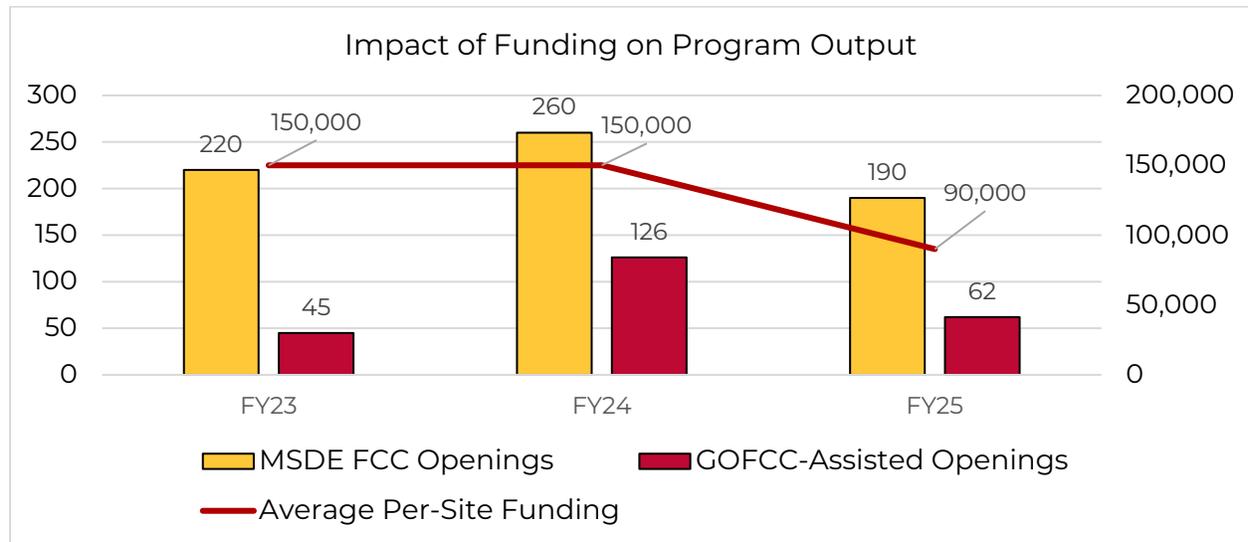
Sustaining Success: Funding and Framework for the Future of GOFCC

FY25 revealed the success of GOFCC depends on sustained funding. The program's funding has been supported through resources such as, state general funds from MSDE (covering three jurisdictions), private philanthropy, and a federal Small Business Administration (SBA) earmark secured by MFN. While the outcomes demonstrate clear impact, without a new investment GOFCC will end in June 2026. The data shows that the program achieves its strongest results when resources allow for consistent staffing, aligned implementation, and full-scale delivery. Continued funding is not simply about maintaining current operations, it is about preserving an initiative which supports the growth of family child care in Maryland.

The Child Trends evaluation reinforced this point. As part of their program scan of the early childhood landscape, researchers looked across Maryland and found no other initiative offering the same combination of licensing guidance, business training, and individualized coaching. While strong early

childhood efforts exist, GOFCC stands alone as the only statewide strategy designed with this critical blend of services.

Figure 5: Funding Impact on Increasing the Supply



Programmatic Goals for FY26 and Future Direction

While funding stability may determine how far GOFCC can scale, program structure determines how well it works. In FY 2025, MFN undertook the critical task of refining a statewide framework. This meant reviewing the pilot pathways tested by each of the five CCRCs during the first two years, incorporating stakeholder feedback, and identifying the core activities that every site must implement. The result is a model that balances statewide consistency with the flexibility needed for CCRCs to respond to the unique strengths and challenges of their local communities.

CORE ELEMENTS OF THE GOFCC FRAMEWORK

- **Training and Business Preparation**
 - COMAR-Required Pre-Service Training
 - Business Operations Coaching/ Training
- **Licensing Support**
 - Application and Licensing Support
 - Completion of Required Licensing Documentation
- **Readiness and Ongoing Coaching**
 - Home Environment Setup Support
 - Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- **Quality and Systems Participations**
 - Maryland EXCELS Participation (enrollment & technical assistance)
 - CCS Program Enrollment, including Tiered Reimbursement

The CCRCs bring these elements to life in ways that reflect their organization's strengths and the needs of their communities.

- *Abilities Network Project Act* leverages a mentorship model that pairs experienced family child care providers with new candidates. Mentors are provided with training and tools to guide peers through the licensing process, offering practical, real-world support that complements coaching. This peer-to-peer model gives new providers a trusted source of advice from colleagues actively operating in the field.

Baltimore Child Care Resource Center at The Family Tree's model integrated deep business coaching into every step of its pathway. Focused workshops break down complex topics like pricing, enrollment, and expense tracking into clear actionable steps. The CCRC also leveraged community partnerships to meet financial barriers head-on, providing targeted support such as equipment or furnishings needed to pass inspections. Their annual end-of-year celebration for graduates has become a hallmark of success and community recognition.

- *Child Care Choices* serves a five-county Western Maryland region, addressing challenges unique to rural and frontier communities. Candidates often face licensing hurdles tied to well and septic systems, distance from regional offices, or HOA requirements. The CCRC responds by combining readiness walkthroughs with strong partnerships with local governments and agencies that can offset startup costs. Their work has been pivotal in reducing deserts and sustaining access in areas where families often rely exclusively on FCCs.

Child Resource Connect has been a leader in language access. Building on the success of an all-Spanish cohort in FY 2024, they expanded in FY25 to support bilingual cohorts, ensuring Spanish-speaking candidates could fully participate while engaging in English-language systems. The CCRC also partners with community workforce development organizations in Prince George's County to connect FCC candidates to entrepreneurship supports, amplifying the reach of GOFCC in high-need neighborhoods.

- *Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center at Salisbury University's* model draws on provider mentors to guide program design and delivery. By integrating their lived experience, the CCRC ensures training and coaching reflects the realities of operating FCC programs in rural communities. The approach helps participants overcome geographic barriers and strengthens alignment with the region's reliance on FCCs as a primary source of care for working families.

These variations demonstrate the framework's balance of consistency and local responsiveness and set the stage for FY 2026, where MFN will align implementation plans across all five jurisdictions within this shared model.

THE FUTURE OF GOFCC AND PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

Entering FY 2026, MFN approaches the year with a dual focus. First, the organization remains committed to delivering a consistent, high-quality program that expands the supply of family child care across Maryland, ensuring more families have access to stable and nurturing care. At the same time, given the uncertainty of future funding, MFN must also prepare for the possibility of closure in June 2026. This means not only refining implementation and expanding supports but also positioning the programs the organization has assisted so they can remain strong and self-sustaining long after GOFCC's direct support ends.

MFN will pursue four programmatic goals in FY 2026, each designed to address immediate needs while laying the groundwork for long-term sustainability:

- **Expand Supply:** GOFCC will continue to increase the number of licensed family child care providers by deepening outreach and recruitment across Maryland. This includes expanding services into Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's Counties while maintaining a statewide footprint. MFN is leveraging partnerships such as the new mentoring collaboration with the Latino Child Care Association of Maryland to guide Spanish-speaking candidates through the licensure process. Efforts are aligned with community needs identified through the ENOUGH initiative, ensuring that outreach is targeted to areas where access to child care is most limited.
- **Strengthen Program Readiness:** GOFCC will reinforce the foundation for long-term provider success by embedding stronger business supports. With the assistance of a business coach and consultant, CCRCs will receive capacity-building support while newly licensed providers gain

targeted guidance on marketing and enrollment strategies to help them fill and sustain their programs. These services are particularly critical as the freeze on the CCS program has left many families struggling to afford care. This expansion of business support is being made possible through private donor funding secured by MFN.

- **Ensure Consistency:** To sustain impact statewide, MFN will continue aligning implementation with a shared framework, MSDE DEC Office of Child Care guidance, and common tools for tracking and accountability. This ensures consistency across jurisdictions while allowing CCRCs to remain responsive to their unique community contexts.
- **Advance Sustainability:** MFN will lead a comprehensive evaluation and continuous improvement process to measure long-term program outcomes and responsiveness. This work aims to ensure that newly licensed family child care programs not only open but remain viable, providing stable, high-quality care for Maryland's children for years to come.

The GOFCC initiative has proven its value; 235 new licensed programs since launch, more than 1,600 child care spaces created, including 377 dedicated to infants. Retention is equally notable, with nearly all providers active at six months, 93% still operating after one year, and 86% sustained beyond eighteen months.

Quality engagement also exceeds state averages, and providers are better equipped to succeed as business owners. These outcomes show what is possible when resources are aligned with need. But the future is not guaranteed. Without new investment, GOFCC will terminate in June 2026. Sustained, full-scale funding is essential to secure what has been built and expand it to meet the ongoing needs of families, providers, and communities.