



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

January 12, 2022

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, Co-Chair
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Co-Chair
Members of the Legislative Policy Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families respectfully submits the following summary of its 2021 interim activities. The joint committee met four times during the interim to learn about programs that serve children, youth, and families and may be relevant throughout an individual's lifespan.

On September 8, the joint committee heard presentations related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and families. Representatives from the Kaiser Family Foundation presented on the foundation's report, *Women, Work, and Family During COVID-19: Findings from the KFF Women's Health Survey*. The National Women's Law Center briefed the joint committee on national trends in how the economic downturn affected women's wages and the child care workforce. Next, the Director of Education and Workforce at the Department of Commerce summarized the department's efforts to assist small and women-owned businesses during the pandemic. The Assistant Secretary for the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning within the Maryland Department of Labor made a presentation summarizing changes in the State's labor force participation rate during the pandemic and the available State programs to assist the workforce, highlighting programs for youth and women. Lastly, a panel from the Maryland Commission for Women discussed findings from the commission's report, *Maryland Women: A Status Report*.

The joint committee's meeting on October 6 covered issues related to long-term care services in the State. To begin, the National Conference of State Legislatures presented data and trends in home- and community-based services, federal funding for the services, and State solutions to increasing the availability of those services. The President and Chief Executive Officer of LeadingAge Maryland described pandemic-related operational and workforce challenges for long-term care providers and offered policy recommendations. The Maryland Department of Health briefed the joint committee on how Medicaid and the Developmental Disabilities Administration responded to the pandemic, including State and federal solutions. To conclude the meeting, the Developmental Disabilities Council and the Maryland Association for Community

Services provided background on how people with developmental disabilities have experienced worse health outcomes from COVID-19 than other groups and how the pandemic has exacerbated workforce issues for community providers.

At its November 10 meeting, the joint committee heard presentations on child care access and affordability, especially during the pandemic. Representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) briefed the joint committee on assistance the department has provided to families and child care providers, including financial assistance distributed to families through the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program. The Maryland State Childcare Association, the Maryland State Family Child Care Association, and four child care providers shared their perspectives on the state of the child care industry, focusing on how the pandemic will likely have a lasting effect on child care programs and access to Child Care Scholarships. The Maryland Retailers Association and Montgomery Moving Forward discussed how child care access impacts employers and the economy overall and described challenges that the child care industry faces from a business perspective. As part of a panel on policy recommendations and solutions, the Maryland Family Network presented an overview of efforts at the State and federal level to support early childhood programs and Montgomery County Early Childhood Services provided a summary of the county's program for supporting the establishment of family child care businesses.

The joint committee's final meeting, on December 16, included a presentation from MSDE answering the joint committee's follow-up questions from the November meeting, primarily about the CCS program. The joint committee also discussed proposed recommendations. After reviewing the various presentations given during the 2021 interim, the joint committee makes the following recommendations, approved by a majority of its members.

Mitigating Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women and Families

In response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected women and families, the State should take the following actions:

- Invest in programs that support the caregiving workforce, which is predominantly female and largely women of color, struggles with severe workforce shortages, and faces difficulty recruiting and retaining employees, including programs that improve access to health insurance, child care, and long-term care; and
- Ensure local management boards (LMBs) receive adequate State funding to provide supportive services and other programs to children and families.

Long-term Care

Understanding the widespread implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and what it has done to children and families in the State, the joint committee makes the following recommendations to strengthen long-term care, which is directly connected to nuclear and extended family well-being:

- Support legislation that aims to enhance the State's efforts to adequately fund long-term care home- and community-based services and innovative payment models to support these services; and
- Support the continuation of Appendix K flexibilities that allowed family members to be paid as staff and allowed community providers to support people in their homes and other alternate locations.

Child Care

The State should take the following actions to improve and support child care in Maryland:

- Resolve the CCS program payment delays affecting low-income families and child care providers;
- Require MSDE to modernize and streamline the CCS application process for families and providers by:
 - Creating a step-by-step video to explain the application process;
 - Creating a list of frequently asked questions in each language for which the CCS application has been translated; and
 - Reducing processing delays by offering training to providers on the CCS application process so they can engage applicants that consent to having providers assist them;
- Fully explore the ability of states to presume families are eligible for the CCS program, giving them the ability to immediately enroll their children in care while MSDE reviews their paperwork and formal approval is pending;
- Expand categorical eligibility, which enables recipients who are eligible for one benefit to be deemed eligible for another benefit:
 - Recipients of two benefits (Temporary Cash Assistance and Supplemental Security Income) are currently categorically eligible for CCS; and
 - Categorical eligibility should be expanded to other programs, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children benefits, rental/housing assistance, and Pell grants/other institutional aid;

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- Establish a fund for child care providers who accept CCS vouchers to provide new hire and retention bonuses to their employees and a fund that would provide new hire assistance to child care providers;
- Support the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot program, established in Chapters 437 and 438 of 2021, and provide additional funding to expand the pilot program statewide and distribute grants for local pilot programs quickly;
- Explore creative licensing flexibilities to expand access to child care services, including the establishment of child care centers at long-term care facilities, hospital, and retirement community campuses;
- Encourage partnerships between the business and child care communities, such as Montgomery Moving Forward and the Research in Action lab in Delaware;
- Expand the child care workforce by increasing State investment in training programs and quickly implementing Chapters 243 and 244 of 2021; and
- Support revising licensure requirements for organizations that provide child care to school-age children, such as the Boys and Girls Club or groups funded by LMBs, that require an equivalent license to daycare providers to operate, but generally serve older children.

The Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families wishes to thank those individuals who contributed their time and expertise to inform and advise the committee's work.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Washington
Senate Chair



Ariana B. Kelly
House Chair

MLW:ABK/APW:EMEW/kkh

cc: Members, Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families
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