



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

February 5, 2019

SB 181: Education – Child Care Subsidies – Mandatory Funding Level

Position: **Support**

The Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) provides financial assistance with child care costs to eligible families in Maryland. The eligible family will receive a voucher to purchase child care directly from the provider of their choice. The State pays the subsidy to providers, while parents pay the required co-pay and any remaining cost. Services are provided to eligible families based on an established categories and priorities. Within in each category, eligible families experiencing homelessness and eligible families of children with disabilities are given first priority. **Subsidy rates must ensure equal access to quality child care.**

The CCSP has undergone dramatic improvements over the last year. Additional funding coupled with policy changes, including changes to income eligibility requirements and raised rates, allowed more families to qualify for subsidies and be able to afford 30% of all child care programs, up from 20%. **This bill will accelerate an increase to the subsidy rate the General Assembly passed last year.**

The potential impact to families of children with disabilities must be noted.

- Eligible families of children with disabilities are given first priority.
- There is a “special disability rate” that can be used to support children with disabilities.

Programs must provide children with disabilities and their families an equal opportunity to participate in the child care program and services by providing reasonable modifications, accommodations, and provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services needed for effective communication.ⁱ Some of these additional accommodations may be costly. In recognition of that, **Maryland law allows for increased CCSP reimbursement rates to a child care provider for the additional costs of providing one-time or ongoing accommodations to a child with a disability – up to 15% above the traditional reimbursement rates or more if approved by MSDE.**ⁱⁱ

The majority of child care providers want to support children with disabilities but need assistance to do so. Accelerating an increase in subsidy rates would help the families of children with disabilities who are still struggling to find and keep high quality child care where their children with disabilities can learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities. However, it is our understanding that this “special disability rate” has not been utilized since SFY1998.ⁱⁱⁱ

When reimbursement rates are adjusted, the “special disability rate” is affected. In order to provide all children, including children with disabilities, and their families with equal access to quality, inclusive child care, it is important that adequate subsidy rates are possible. Therefore, the Maryland DD Council supports SB 181.

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ⁱ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 (2009).

ⁱⁱ COMAR 13A.14.06.11(E)(5).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Maryland Family Network Public Policy Handbook 2017-2018*, Appendix B.