

**TO:** Maryland General Assembly Members

**FROM:** Dr. Shayna Cook, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood

**DATE:** June 13, 2024

**SUBJECT:** UPDATE: Funding for the Maryland Child Care Credential Program and the Training Vouchers and Reimbursements Program

### **Update on the Maryland Child Care Credential Program and the Training Vouchers and Reimbursements Program**

I am writing to inform you about the status of the Maryland Child Care Credential Program and the associated Training Vouchers and Reimbursements Program.

Since 2000, the Maryland Child Care Credential Program has recognized individual child care providers who have increased their qualifications beyond the requirements of State licensing and registration regulations. This program encourages participation from registered family child care providers and child care center staff. Currently, 8,647 early childhood educators, which represents 15% of the field, actively participate in the Child Care Credential Program.

Embedded within this initiative is the Training Vouchers and Reimbursements Program. Early childhood educators who participate in the Child Care Credential Program at Level Two or higher are eligible to receive a training voucher. This program assists child care professionals with the costs of professional development training. Those at Level Two or higher can receive up to \$400 each year, subject to the availability of funds. This year, 933 training vouchers were issued, and 8,420 early childhood educators are eligible for a voucher. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the current application window for both programs remains open through June 30, 2024, and it is expected that all funds will be expended.

The Maryland Child Care Credential program and the Training Vouchers and Reimbursements Program are funded through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. According to the Blueprint legislation, these programs were, from the beginning, set to sunset in June 2024. Based on a plain reading of this funding mandate in law, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) confirmed that this program funding should sunset in June 2024, and the Governor's Fiscal Year 2025 budget reflected this.

The Governor and the General Assembly have restored funding for these programs in Fiscal Year 2026. Fiscal Year 2025 is a gap year of funding for both the Maryland Child Care Credential and Training Vouchers Reimbursements programs. The Maryland State Department of Education has no federal or state funding available to allocate to this program during the gap year.

MSDE appreciates the General Assembly and Governor's support in maintaining funding for the CCCPDF program. It is a vital resource for career advancement and retention of early childhood educators in Maryland. The recent budget also allocated \$3 million to the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF), which was also set to end. This Fund, while separate, continues to support the workforce by

fully funding early childhood educators to obtain their Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential and associate, bachelor's and master's degrees in early childhood education or a related field in exchange for a commitment to work in child care for a set number of years based on the degree or credential attained.

In lieu of funding for FY 2025 for the Maryland Child Care Credential program or the Training Vouchers and Reimbursements program, MSDE's new Office of Early Learning and Instruction and Quality Improvement Initiative Branch in the Division of Early Childhood will continue to offer high quality, free professional development and technical assistance opportunities for early childhood educators across the State.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any additional questions, please reach out to Dr. Akilah Alleyne by email at [akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or by phone at 410-767-0504.