CITY OF BALTIMORE

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor
Zeke Cohen – Council President

Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead - Director
100 Holliday Street, Room 415
Baltimore, MD 21202

LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
The Honorable Ryan Dorsey
CHAIR

HEARING NOTES

LO25-0039
First Steps, Strong Start: Childcare in Baltimore City

Hearing Date: 1/29/2026
Hearing Start Time: 12:32 PM
Hearing End Time: 2:45 PM
Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex
Total Estimated Attendance: around 30 people

Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** John Bullock
- Sharon Green Middleton
- Zac Blanchard
- Jermaine Jones
- **Vice Chair** Mark Parker
- Odette Ramos

Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Zeke Cohen

MAJOR SPEAKERS
(This is <u>NOT</u> an attendance record.)

- **State Superintendent Dr. Wright**
- **Tracy Harris from Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center**
- **Rogar Shulman from the Fund for Educational Excellence**
- **Imani-Angela Rose from ECAC**
- **Mike Hershcenfeld from the Maryland Family Network**
- **Director Brooks**

NOTES

- Chair bullock opened the hearing introducing the LO and passed it off to CP Cohen
- CP addressed the need for childcare and how most of the members currently here need childcare. Stated how much it consumes families budget. Mentioned how the city needs universal kindergarten. Mentions how they are not doing well enough. Mentions how parents should have easy access to childcare
- Chair Bullock gave remarks and handed the floor to Dr. Wright to begin her presentation

- Chair Bullock made a view remark about the presentation and asked how can they disclose gaps for disparities
  - Sarah from MSDE: children with disabilities – if a family is receiving SSI they are not on the waitlist and continue to receive scholarships
- Council President asked MSDE doing to advocate to lift the freeze?
  - MSDE: they do not advocate they educate, they make sure to uplift the child. Have a childcare scholarship briefing coming up, where they can show how this can expand the economy. They make sure to educate on the provider community
- CP asked MSDE to push the governor and general assembly to unfreeze the scholarship for early childcare
- Councilman Jones asked MSDE is there a projected timeline for the freeze, how much funds will there be?
  - MSDE: Have a provider reimbursement happening right now. They have enough money to start moving some people off the waitlist. They want to be able to support in a variety of ways. It right now will just be removal from waitlist unless they get more funding.
- Councilman Blanchard mentioned how for each of his kids the cost of childcare is around the number of their mortgage. The councilman then asked what can be done to help outside of government subsidy?
  - MSDE: some states goes to business and public dollars, Maryland is just public dollars. Once they receive their capstone project back they will be able to address other options
- Vice Chair Parker asked MSDE: reimbursement was it by law or by order.
  - MSDE: would have to look into it
- Vice Chair Parker also asked what the cost is for the state for an average 4 year old CCS scholarship student vs the cost of the state for a pre-k expansion?
  - Pre-k expansion is $14k and looking to go to $20k.
- Councilwoman Ramos asked MSDE: waitlist, most of the applications being for infants – assuming someone has one child they may be getting the scholarship for 4 years? Answer is yes. What exactly is the number of years someone is in the program and how they can stay with the families so that this is not a one time thing.
  - MSDE: once a family receives the scholarship they have it for 24 months. This is to create stability for not just the parent but also the provider and child. They do not know how long families stay on though.
- With the 24 months they would have to reapply? Answer: yes.
  - Age out at 13. The income is 85% when they are cut off
- Chair moved to Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to give their presentation
- The Baltimore City Child Care Resource began their presentation following ECAC
- The next presentation was the Maryland Network Family
- Following the Maryland Network Family the Fund for Educational Excellence gave their presentation

- The last presentation was the cities Department of Health and the Mayors Office of Family Success
- The hearing moved to committee questions.
- Vice Chair Parker brought up Head Starts data and how well the excels program is. Asked a question for MSDE, are there any limitations for eligibility for immigrant parents.
  - The child must be a citizen not the parents
- The Vice Chair also asked ECAC the current and historic changes for staff in early child care salary
  - ECAC: they do not have that detailed information
  - MSDE: $15,600 for pre-k
- Vice Chair asked the Fund: with the pre-k expansion program, under the blueprint of funding for the pre-k program how many current seats are for private providers
  - Fund: does not have that information right now
- How many new seats in private providers vs. expansion seats
  - The Fund and MSDE will work together to get that answer
- Vice Chair asked about capacity
  - Fund: they are thinking of it when it comes to funding more about the latter. (ex. Can be fund can go towards buying more cribs). They look at providers and what they can provide for them
- CP mentioned how seeing the maps and breakdown by district from the Maryland Family Network was great to see
- CP mentioned how the staff issues in childcare where teachers would not stay long because they do not pay enough. How to solve the issue of wages and making this a sustainable career
  - Harris: each childcare program operates as a small business.
  - ECAC: Looking at the true cost of care then what it takes to do it, if you look into salary you must look into benefits. They can not meet it.
- VP Middleton mentioned how Pemico had a grandparents program. Asked if there are any programs that connect with the older adults helping
  - ECAC: in Garrison neighborhood where they have asked older adults to volunteer and help, it is a mix between getting the center and also safety issues
  - MFN: Mentioned how the city can play a role in this issue. Connect senior housing with child care centers, tax credits, etc.
  - MOCFS: MOCFS and Older Affairs have been working closely on initiatives like this
- VP Middleton asked if there is any teen parent connection
  - MFN: The padding center started out as focusing on teen pregnancy. Most programs do help with getting GED programs or high school diplomas, etc.
- Councilman Jones asked has there been though around childcare and attaching it on the employer
  - MFN: yes, childcare is a broken business model, there are a few states (NM, Vermont, Mass.) but this requires a source of revenue. 10 states that are participating in try share where 1/3 of the cost of childcare is from the government, 1/3 paid by parents and 1/3 paid

by employers. Tax credits for employers came out of congress last year. Baltimore Police Department are under a pilot program to provide small subsidy for a group of employees.

- The chair moved to public testimony
- Following public testimony the hearing was adjourned.

Hearing Packet in bill file? --- ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **N/A**
Attendance Sheet in bill file? --- ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **N/A**
Vote Record in bill file? --- ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **N/A**
Agency reports read? -- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒ **N/A**
Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? -------------------------- ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **N/A**
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill bile? ------------ ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒ **N/A**
Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file? ---------------- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒ **N/A**

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Notes Date: 1/29/2026