



We improve the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs that tackle disparities and close equity gaps to ensure that there is an opportunity for all our most vulnerable to thrive.

## **Testimony before the Budget and Taxation Committee**

### **In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 181- Education - Child Care Subsidies - Mandatory Funding Levels**

**Melissa S. Rock, Birth to Three Strategic Initiative Director  
February 5, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 181- Education – Child Care Subsidies—Mandatory Funding Levels. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

The Child Care Subsidy program is in place to ensure that high quality child care is accessible to low income families.<sup>1</sup> It is well documented that living in poverty, and experiencing the toxic stress that accompanies that lifestyle, impedes brain development in children.<sup>2</sup> Historically, Maryland's Child Care Subsidy was not meeting these families' needs. While the federal recommendations are that the subsidy rate be up to 75% of market value of child care costs, before last year's legislation that expands the child care subsidy, Maryland's were among the lowest in the entire country at **9%**. This means that 91% of all child care centers charge more than the subsidy covers. Therefore, even for the few families that are eligible to receive the subsidy, it does not cover enough of the cost of child care to give that family the access as intended.

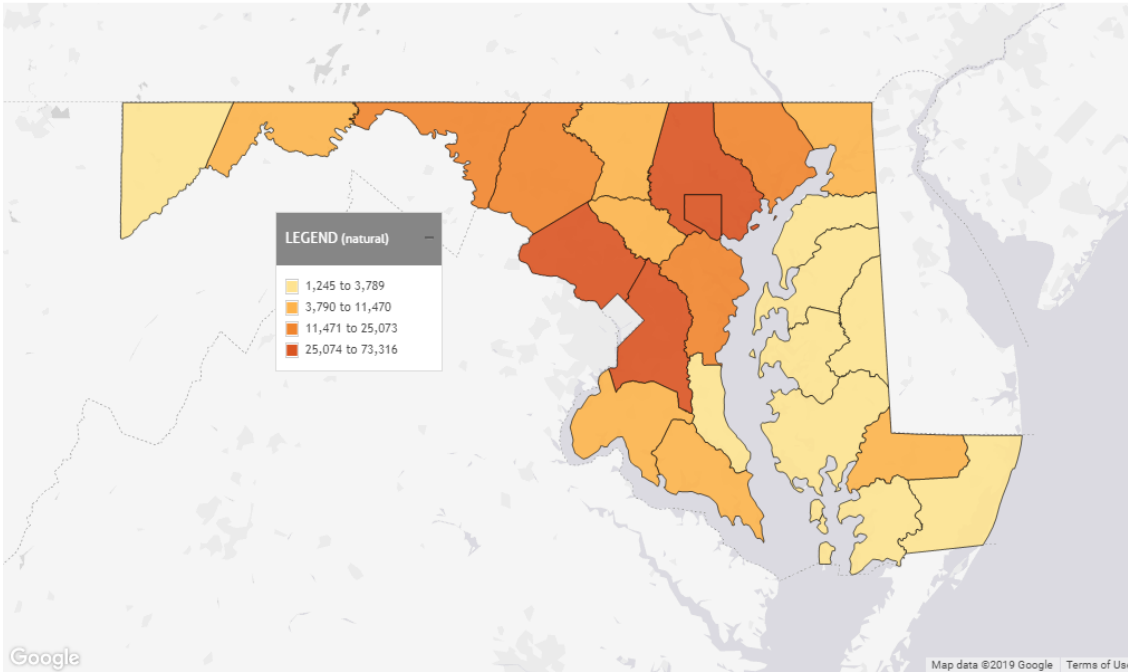
Last year, legislation was passed to bring Maryland's child care subsidy up to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile by 2022. SB 181 builds on last year's successful legislation but accelerates the child care subsidy expansion so that by 2021 the child care subsidy reaches at least the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. These increases are critical for Maryland's Child Care Subsidy to eliminate the barriers to high quality child care faced by low income families in Maryland.

**We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 181 to increase access to high quality child care for low income families in Maryland.**

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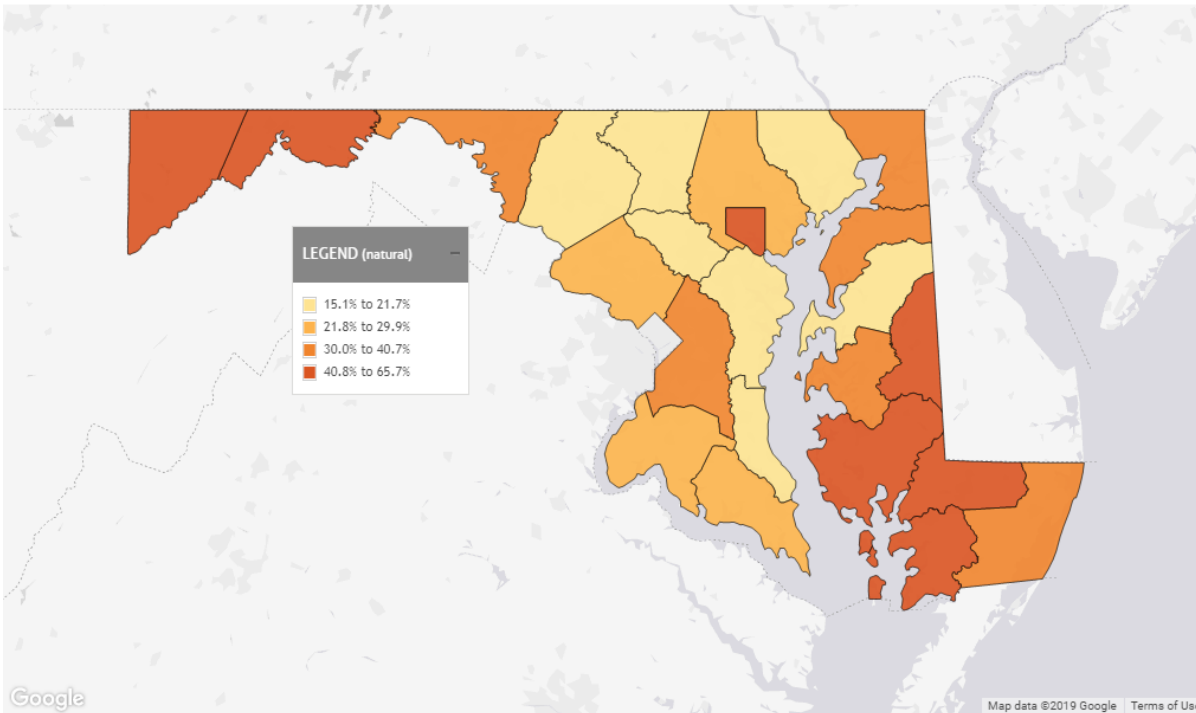
<sup>1</sup> Please see the maps on the back of this testimony to see the rates and numbers of children living at or below 200% of poverty by county.

<sup>2</sup> "Toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as ... the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years."  
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>



### Children Living Below 200% Of Poverty (Number) - 2017

Advocates for Children and Youth  
 KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)  
 A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation



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