

Childcare Access for Student Parents at Institutions of Higher Education in Maryland

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In partnership with the Maryland Commission for Women
and the University of Maryland School of Public Policy



Background

- A lack of access to childcare prohibits many student parents from pursuing and completing higher education
- We do not have a full picture of who student parents in Maryland are because institutions do not collect data on them
- Investing in this population can provide societal benefits through a more educated population, larger tax base, and stronger economy



Research Questions

- a. What barriers do student parents face in accessing childcare?
- b. What policies and strategies can the state of Maryland, in partnership with institutions of higher education, implement to improve access to childcare for this population?

Analysis: Barriers to Childcare Access

Barriers Identified in the Literature Review

High Costs

- Average annual cost of childcare for one child is \$19,877.50, which is more expensive than in-state tuition at every public college and university in Maryland

Irregular Schedules

- Many student parents have to take evening classes, complete clinical hours, and/or only require part-time care a few days of the week, which doesn't align with the "traditional" hours most childcare providers are open

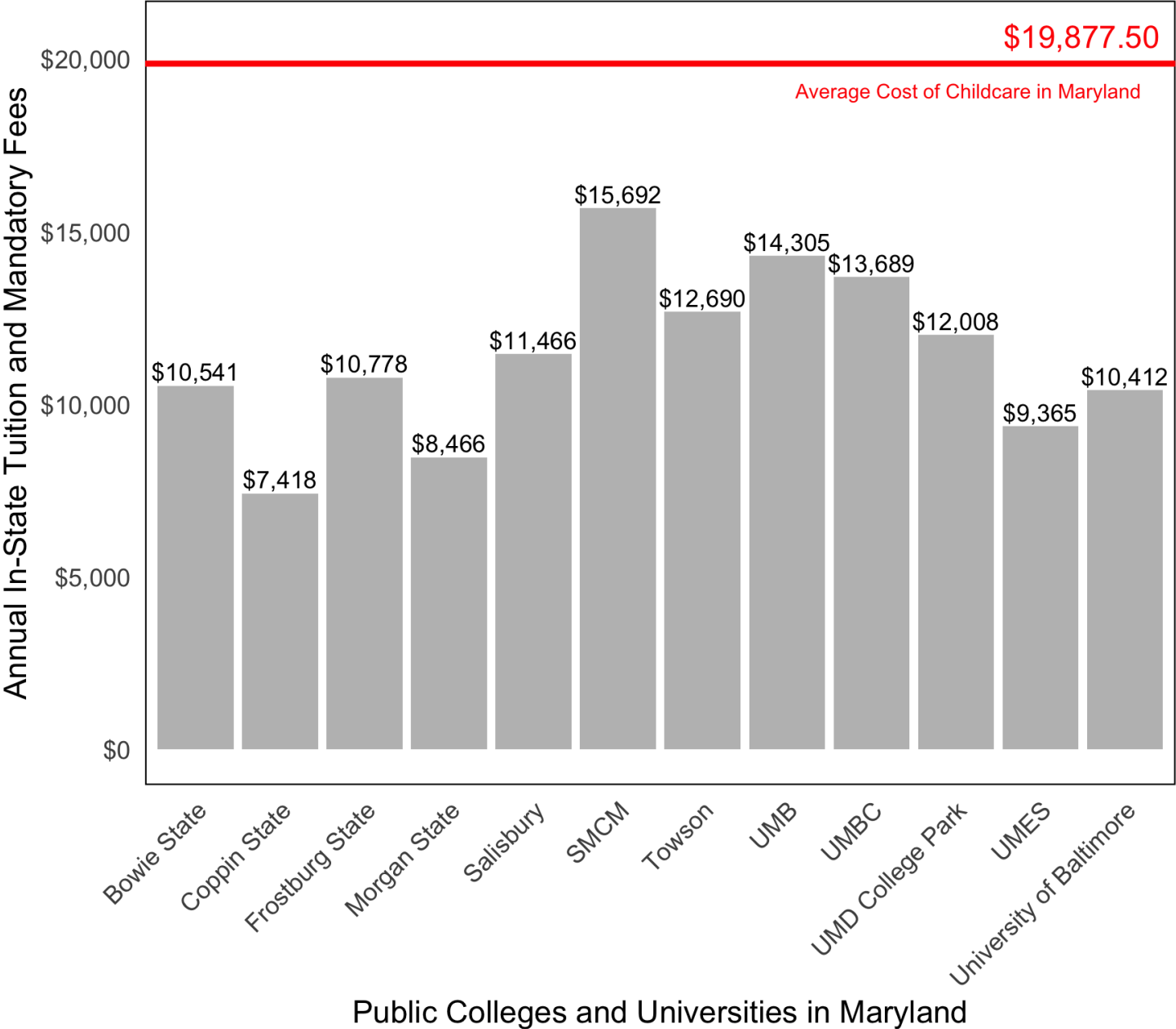
Limited Slots

- Demand for childcare exceeds supply: 16.2% childcare gap in MD
- Lack of infant and toddler slots in particular
- Long waitlists

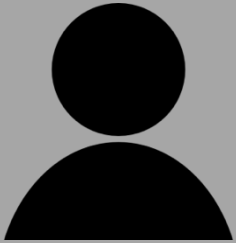
Lack of Integration Within the Institution/Higher Education System

- Few institutions have a dedicated office, staff member, or websites with childcare resources

In-State Tuition vs. Average Childcare Cost in Maryland



Interviews with Student Parents in Maryland

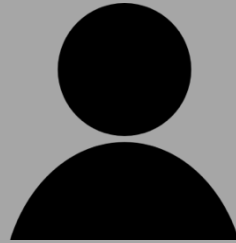


Graduate student at
a 4-year university

1 child

They are the primary caregiver for their child. Family lives nearby and are able to watch their child when they have to be on campus.

Looked at other arrangements, but faced information and cost barriers.



Undergraduate student
at a community college

3 children

They are able to use Maryland CCS and CCAMPIS grants to pay for childcare at a center near their home.

Extremely appreciative of their institution's resources and said that they would not have been able to go back to school without them.



Undergraduate student
at a community college

1 child

They are able to use CCAMPIS grants to pay for childcare at a center near their home.

Also extremely grateful for their institution's resources and financial support.

Analysis: Policy Recommendations and Strategies

Background: Current Programs and Policies Available to Student Parents in Maryland

1

Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) Federal Grants

Awarded to institutions, not individuals

ED stopped issuing CCAMPIS grants in 2023



2

Federal and State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)

The average value of the tax credit is small compared to childcare expenses

Federal CDCTC is nonrefundable



3

Head Start Programs

Depends on location and availability

Must meet eligibility guidelines



4

Maryland Child Care Scholarship Program (CCS)

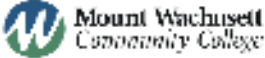
Frozen since May 2025



Scan of Campus-Based Childcare Centers



- Half (**14 out of 28**) of the public colleges and universities in Maryland have campus-based childcare centers
 - 8 community colleges and 6 four-year universities
 - 4 other institutions previously had a campus-based center but have since closed
- I sent out a survey to the institutions with campus-based centers
 - 6 responses out of 14 centers
- Characteristics of campus-based centers:
 - Many are making efforts to support student parents through tuition discounts and flexible schedule options
 - Tuition is expensive, but it is also expensive to operate a childcare center
 - About half accept infants and toddlers, the rest are for children ages 2-5
 - Many accept Maryland CCS
 - Many employ students

Case Study	Programs/Policies	Category
Mount Wachusett Community College 	• Child Watch drop-in childcare • CCAMPIS grants • Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) dollars • Campus-based childcare center with Head Start partnership	Drop-In Childcare Direct Funding Head Start Partnerships
University of Wisconsin-Madison 	• Office of Childcare and Family Resources • KidsKare hourly/backup childcare • Child Care Tuition Assistance Program (CCTAP)	Institution/Higher Ed System Coordination Drop-In Childcare Direct Funding
Minnesota 	• Passed legislation requiring public IHEs to collect data on student parent status and designate a “college navigator” for student parents • Grants: ○ Postsecondary Child Care Grant ○ Student Parents Supports Initiative	Data Collection Institution/Higher Ed System Coordination Direct Funding

Evaluation of Policy Options

Five Categories of Policies:

- 1) Drop-in Childcare
- 2) Head Start Partnerships with Campus-Based Centers
- 3) Mandating Data Collection
- 4) Direct Funding: Grants, Childcare Tuition Assistance, etc.
- 5) Institution/University System Coordination

Evaluation based on:

- 1) Child Trends Access Framework
 - a. Meets parents' needs
 - b. Reasonable effort
 - c. Supports child's development
 - d. Affordability
- 2) Financial Impact: Funding sources and cost estimates (if available)
- 3) Political Feasibility
- 4) Addresses Barriers

Policy Recommendations

1) Mandate Data Collection

- a. HBoo6/SB420 passed in the 2026 MGA session, now awaiting the governor's signature

2) MHEC Coordination of Resources and Services

- a. HBoo6/SB420 also requires public IHEs to adopt a plan for pregnant and parenting students, which includes referrals for programs, scholarships, and subsidies
- b. Requiring institutions to designate an employee to share childcare resources with student parents
- c. Convening stakeholders to develop best practices to share with institutions
- d. Liaison between institutions and Head Start programs to encourage partnerships

3) Pilot Programs for Drop-In Childcare and Direct Funding

- a. Pass legislation that would create and fund pilot programs
- b. Design informed by stakeholders and case study examples
- c. Provide technical assistance and create guidelines for programs

Thank you!

Questions?