

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure the budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and well-being.

House Appropriations Committee HB 206- Unaccompanied Minors in Need of Shelter and Supportive Services SUPPORT

January 28, 2020

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC)¹ is a consortium of Maryland organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to promote meaningful child welfare reform and the prevention of child abuse and neglect.. CPMC supports the passage of bill HB 206- Unaccompanied Minors in Need of Shelter and Supportive Services. HB 206 establishes that unaccompanied homeless minors have the legal capacity to consent to admission to emergency shelters and supportive services.

Currently in Maryland, the law is silent as to whether service providers can provide shelter to unaccompanied minors and therefore many service providers are reluctant to do so. As a result there are only three youth shelters throughout Maryland that provide shelter and supportive services for all of Maryland's unaccompanied youth.

Each year, schools in counties across Maryland identify thousands of unaccompanied homeless minors, or minors who lack stable housing and are not in physical custody of a parent or guardian. Unaccompanied homeless minors who lack access safe shelter, housing, or foster care are vulnerable to exploitation, unsafe living situations, and school drop out.

For these reasons, CPMC asks that this committee issue a favorable report on HB 206 to ensure that unaccompanied homeless minors in Maryland have increased access to safe shelter, which will prevent human trafficking and other exploitation and will enable shelter providers to connect minors to child welfare services when eligible.

¹ Members in support of HB 206- Advocates for Children and Youth, Associated Catholic Charities, Baltimore Child Abuse Center, Board of Childcare, Child Justice Incorporated, Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates, The Family Tree, Maryland Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics, State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, Diana Phillip