

Written Testimony in Favor of SB585

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My husband and I have been foster parents since 2016 and have seen far too many children languishing in the foster care system for years without hope of an end to the ordeal. Our first placements, a brother and sister, were initially removed from their mother's home in May of 2016. Their mother is an alcoholic and the children were severely neglected in her care. Since that first removal, they have been returned to their mother and removed again 3 additional times. Each subsequent time a child is removed from their parent, their trauma is doubled.

There is a reason that foster children are more likely to end up homeless or in jail. The constant uncertainty and trauma of being at the whim of a bunch of adults that they don't really know or trust leads them to have more difficulty transitioning to adulthood. It doesn't have to be this way.

SB585 will ensure that social workers, attorneys and judges will have to consider the options for a permanent home for children who are in care 15 out of 22 months. Right now, this benchmark is largely ignored and while in many cases, reunification is an achievable goal, in others, it is pursued to the detriment of the children. Not every biological parent is capable of or willing to make the necessary changes to become a viable parent.

Maryland is 4th from the bottom nationwide in permanency for children in care. We must do better. Our children and our communities deserve better. I ask that you support SB585. Thank you.

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