

February 3, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in support of House Bill 369 / Senate Bill 586. I have served as an adoption competent educational resource for foster and adoptive families since 2012. I am also the adoptive mother of 2 children adopted through DSS in Maryland.

Since 2012, I have helped support foster and adoptive families in ensuring the best needs for the child are met, even when that meet means heartbreak. I support reunification and understand the importance of the birth family relationship. I also understand the profound impact foster families can have on the youth in care. Sadly, as both part of my own adoptive process and as part of other stories I have been involved in, I have seen how the people who care for children in care have no voice in what happens to those children. They are the ones who see the child every day – in every tough situation. And yet their voice is the one that gets left out of transcripts. Ignored in some cases. And in erasing these caregivers from the narrative, it paints an incomplete picture of that child's life. Those children's lives in their placement homes are equally as important as their life living with their birth families, and yet we treat that experience as flippant and inconsequential, teaching our foster and adoptive children that a part of their lives – a very real part that they live with every single day – does not matter. But in the weeks and sometimes years our youth spend in these placements, growth and change and emotions and lives happen, and that aspect needs to be presented in the true narratives of these children. Passing this bill means the people who interact with our youth in care get to speak for those youth in a way that an agency or lawyer simply cannot do. And that is essential to ensuring the complete story of these children are heard.

Thank you for considering approving this bill.

Sincerely,

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