

A LIFEBRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



Date: February 13, 2024

To: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and the Judiciary Committee Members

Reference: House Bill 542, Department of Human Services - Children in Foster Care - Luggage

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Clippinger and Committee Members:

On behalf of LifeBridge Health's Center for Hope we thank you for this opportunity to provide information on House Bill 542. Center for Hope provides intervention and prevention for: child abuse, domestic violence, community violence, and elder justice for survivors, caregivers, and communities. At LifeBridge Health, we recognize the devastating impact of violence in our communities, and the growing number of victims of all ages. This is a public health issue and we need to help our communities by partnering with the people in them, to break the cycle of violence. We need to partner alongside community leaders, stand shoulder to shoulder with parents and caregivers, and help provide survivors of violence and crime with support and healing, in order to grow a collective hope for a better city and a better world.

At Center for Hope's medical suite, we see children of all ages from Baltimore City and County coming in for initial health visits within five days of removal and entry into foster care. We are so grateful to Comfort Cases and the ability to be able to give each child a bag full of toiletries, hygiene products, new clean pajamas, socks, and comfort items like a stuffed animal, blanket, and a book. Each child is so thankful to receive a bag for their items. Many little ones are excited to tell us what they are going to put inside their bag and show off wearing their new backpack. Several teens have stated they can't wait to use this bag for their items instead of using their school backpack. Other children are just so excited and appreciative to have items they can call their own.

We have seen so many children that had just had their lives flipped upside down and are living with complete strangers to them. Many teens living in hotels with one-to-one mentors while workers are attempting to find placements for them. So many of these children don't have a bag big enough to grab shoes, underwear, medications, etc. and they come to us for medical exams not wearing any underwear. Many children were not able to bring anything at all with them except for the clothes on their back.

By supporting this bill, you are giving these children and teens a chance to feel human. Children and teens that have been through this traumatic event don't need their lives to be any harder than it already is. By giving each child a bag to carry their belongings from location to location you are treating them like a human, like someone that is important enough to be cared for.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a Favorable report for House Bill 542.

For more information, please contact:

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