



February 15, 2024

**Department of Human Services-Children in Foster Care-Luggage
House Bill 542**

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

House Bill 542 presents a crucial opportunity to address a fundamental issue affecting the dignity and self-worth of foster children: the provision of new luggage. For too long, many children in foster care have been forced to carry their belongings in trash bags during transitions between placements. This practice not only perpetuates feelings of shame and inadequacy but also undermines their sense of self-worth and dignity.

Passing this legislation would signify a powerful statement to these children, affirming that they are valued members of our community deserving of respect and consideration. By ensuring that each child receives brand-new luggage, we send a clear message that they are worthy of care and attention, regardless of their past experiences or circumstances.

It is imperative to recognize the profound impact that trauma, instability, and loss can have on a child's psyche. Providing them with their own new belongings, including luggage, serves as a tangible symbol of hope and renewal—a fresh start unencumbered by the shadows of their past. Every child deserves the opportunity to move forward with dignity and pride, unencumbered by the baggage of their past experiences.

MARFY stands firmly in support of House Bill 542, as it aligns with our core mission of advocating for the well-being of foster youth. By addressing this

seemingly simple yet profoundly meaningful issue, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of countless children, empowering them to navigate the challenges of the foster care system with a renewed sense of worth and purpose.

Furthermore, the passage of this legislation would not only benefit the individual children it serves but also contribute to a more efficient and humane placement process overall. Ensuring that each child is equipped with the tools they need for success is essential to safeguarding their well-being and fostering a sense of stability and security.

In conclusion, we urge you to support House Bill 542 and to recognize the importance of providing foster children with brand-new luggage. By doing so, we affirm our commitment to upholding the dignity and worth of every child in our care, and we take a meaningful step towards creating a more compassionate and inclusive foster care system for all. **It is for these reasons we politely ask for a favorable report on House Bill 542.**

For more information call or email:

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