

CRAIG J. ZUCKER
Legislative District 14
Montgomery County



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 120
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3625
800-492-7122 Ext. 3625
Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us

Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 765- Out-of-Home Placement Providers - Individuals Enrolled in Higher
Education and Vocational Training Programs
March 25th, 2025
1:00pm
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 765-Out-of-Home Placement Providers - Individuals Enrolled in Higher Education and Vocational Training Programs**. Senate Bill 765 mirrors the posture of House Bill 809. Both bills passed their respective chambers unanimously. I would like to thank Delegate Griffith for his leadership on cross-file, House Bill 809.

When foster youth attend college or vocational training, they need a place to return during breaks, holidays, and institutional closures. Senate Bill 765 authorizes individuals enrolled in higher education or vocational training to return to previous out-of-home placement providers during these periods. The bill establishes a structured process with specific timelines: individuals must request to return at least 30 days before a scheduled break, the local department must provide a recommendation within 21 days, and DHS must make a final determination at least 14 days before the break. This ensures young adults have certainty about their housing situation well in advance.

While DHS recently implemented regulations allowing for a similar arrangement, those rules only apply to residential homes and only for individuals 18 or younger. Senate Bill 765 significantly expands this protection by ensuring the authorization covers any foster individual regardless of age and applies to all types of out-of-home placements. Since introduction, the bill has been amended to use broader terminology covering individuals over 18, establishing clear timelines applying to all out-of-home placement providers. Importantly, the amended language has been agreed to by both the Department of Human Services and providers.

Children in foster care face unique challenges, and attending college is a significant achievement. For a population that needs consistency, it's our responsibility to remove barriers to higher education. By addressing housing stability during academic breaks, Senate Bill 765 supports educational success for these individuals and prevents them from having to choose between pursuing education and having a place to call home.

For these reasons, **I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 765.**