

SB 765- OHPP- Senator Zucker- Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Craig Zucker

Position: FAV

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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 - Maximum Number of Children -
Exemption
March 4th, 2025
1:00pm
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and distinguished members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support** of **Senate Bill 765- Out-of-Home Placement Providers - Maximum Number of Children - Exemption**. I would like to thank the co-sponsors, Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Senators Folden and Gallion.

Currently, our state imposes bed caps on foster care homes, limiting the number of children a home can house at any given time. These caps have created an unintended barrier for foster youth by forcing them to make the choice between education and housing stability. A sense of home and belonging is crucial for all college students, but for foster youth, this is not always guaranteed. Unfortunately, we have encountered a situation where a foster youth declined a college acceptance letter specifically because they feared losing their placement in their foster home.

When foster youth attend college, they need a place to return during breaks, holidays, and institutional closures. Under current regulations, if their foster family reaches maximum capacity with new placements, these students must find alternative housing arrangements. This uncertainty leads to housing instability and can cause disruptions in education for students already navigating the complexities of higher education with fewer support systems than their peers.

SB 765 creates an exemption for foster youth enrolled in an institution of higher education from bed cap regulations specifically during scheduled breaks, temporary closures of the institution, and approved leaves of absence when both the student and foster family agree to this arrangement. This ensures housing stability during critical periods when students most need a place to call home and removes a significant barrier to educational advancement.

We have been working with the Maryland Department of Human Services to draft amendments to align the bill with recent regulatory changes. We will share these finalized updates with the Committee for consideration.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 765. Thank you for your consideration.

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Uploaded by: Steven Acerno

Position: FAV

SB765 Out-Of-Home Placement Providers-Maximum Number of Children-Exemption
House Appropriations Committee
Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region, I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 765. This is an important piece of legislation that would help college students navigate the transition into higher education with the opportunity to continue to receive support from their foster families.

As for most high school graduates, the idea of enrolling and attending a university can be both exciting and intimidating. For foster youth, the decision to attend and live at a university also means losing their placement in their foster home. This can undoubtedly create many obstacles, one of which is the creation of housing instability. Many foster parents are eager to continue their support of college students, however, foster care regulations limit the number of foster youth a family may have in their home at any given time. If a foster family wants to continue to foster other youth in the system, there may not be space available for the college student to return to his/her family.

Currently, if a college student were in this situation a waiver process would have to be initiated with no guarantee of it being approved. Senate Bill 765 removes unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and provides a practical solution to assist college students to maintain their strong sense of family support as they strive to reach their education goals.

By passing this legislation, Maryland can help foster youth succeed in higher education by reducing unnecessary disruptions and giving them the housing stability they need. I respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and help ensure that no college student in the foster care system is left without a home to go back to.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Steve Acerno, LCSW-C
Director of Family and Children Supports
The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region

SB765-HB809_MARFY_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



March 4, 2025

Senate Bill 765 – Out-of-Home Placement Providers – Maximum Number of Children – Exemption

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), we submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 765 (SB756), which seeks to establish a regulatory framework setting the maximum number of children that may be placed with an out-of-home placement provider while allowing for reasonable exemptions under certain circumstances.

MARFY is a coalition of private child-caring organizations that provide foster care, group homes, and independent living programs for Maryland’s most vulnerable children—those who have been placed out of their homes due to abuse, neglect, severe mental health conditions, or complex medical needs. Through more than 200 programs statewide, our member organizations work to provide stable, supportive, and high-quality care for children in need.

Children in out-of-home placements deserve environments that promote safety, stability, and personal growth. By ensuring that placement providers adhere to reasonable limits on the number of children they serve, SB765 helps ensure that children in care receive the individualized attention and support they require. This bill appropriately balances these necessary regulations with an exemption for children enrolled in accredited institutions of higher education who need temporary housing due to campus closures, scheduled breaks, or temporary leaves of absence. This provision is essential in preventing unnecessary disruptions to their academic progress and overall well-being.

How SB765 Supports Maryland’s Vulnerable Youth:

1. **Maintaining Quality of Care:** Research has shown that overcrowded placements can compromise the level of care and attention that children receive. This bill will promote more effective and sustainable child welfare practices by ensuring that capacity limitations are in place.
2. **Flexibility for Higher Education Students:** Many youth in foster care pursue post-secondary education, and unforeseen circumstances such as university breaks can leave them without stable housing. SB765 ensures that their progress is not hindered by bureaucratic limitations.
3. **Enhancing Provider Accountability:** By requiring the Department of Human Services to adopt clear regulations, SB765 will increase accountability and improve transparency



Maryland Association of
Resources for Families & Youth

in Maryland's child welfare system.

MARFY strongly supports SB765 and asks the Maryland General Assembly to pass this bill to enhance the well-being of children in out-of-home care while preserving critical flexibility for those pursuing higher education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

For more information call or email:

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SB0765_INFO_DHS.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Sledge Government Affairs

Position: INFO



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

March 4, 2025

The Honorable Will C. Smith, Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0765 - OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT PROVIDERS - MAXIMUM
NUMBER OF CHILDREN - EXEMPTION - POSITION: INFORMATIONAL ONLY**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide a letter of information regarding Senate Bill 765 (SB 765).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) serves youth in out-of-home placements affected by SB 765.

We agree with the goals of the sponsor to preserve relationships between older youth and the families with whom they developed strong relationships while living with a resource family. Through the passage of [SB 708 \(2024\)](#) and our Family Matters initiative we are working toward effectively ending youth "aging-out" of the foster care system. SB 765 seeks to provide additional transitional stability for youth in out-of-home care pursuing higher education. SB 765 is concerned with a problem that may occur when youth under the age of 18 attending higher education institutions are unable to return to their previous placement, based on the type of placement and number of other children living in the home.

We promulgated new regulations, [COMAR 07.02.25](#) on December 12, 2024 regarding LDSS Resource Home Requirements. [COMAR 07.02.25.05](#) sets the upper limit on the number of children for whom a resource parent may provide care in their home,

including a parent's own children. Our regulations allow a resource family licensed by the local department of social services to have up to 6 children in their home under age 18, including the resource parent's children and children in out-of-home care. The regulation also permits local department directors to make an exception to allow a resource family to have up to 8 children under the age of 18 in certain situations.

SB 765 would ensure children who want to return to former out-of-home placements during academic breaks do not count against capacity limits for resource homes. A youth attending college and returning for academic breaks is likely to be over the age of 18, and would not be counted against the child limit. Youth returning from academic breaks who are under age 18 would meet the exception provided by current regulation. Out-of-home placement providers must be able to provide children with appropriate accommodations in line with COMAR regulatory requirements. For example, the child's sleeping and living quarters shall provide for privacy, study, and storage of clothes.

SB 765 is intended to further allow children to return to their resource homes without the exercise of the local director's discretion and protects against any changes in future policies or regulations that might limit their ability to do so. It would also apply to other types of out-of-home placements, for which similar regulatory exceptions do not exist.

We thank the sponsor for championing the growth and transition of our children in out-of-home care, ensuring they have the support they need to succeed as they enter young adulthood. We support the spirit of SB 765 wholeheartedly, and welcome continued work with the sponsor and committee. We want to ensure the bill has the intended effect and fully captures the population of youth in our care who may experience a short or temporary break in housing accommodations during the academic year.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide a letter of information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. We are happy to work with Senator Zucker and the Committee on Senate Bill 765. If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,


Carnitra White
Principal Deputy Secretary