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Appropriations Committee

120 Taylor House Office Building

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Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

HB0915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Lauren Pruitt, and I am the Legal Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ Marylanders from diverse backgrounds. I am writing in support of **HB0915**, which seeks to establish a workgroup to identify and evaluate the effectiveness of resources currently available to youth who have aged out of foster care to support independence in adulthood.

The assessments of this workgroup are critical to supporting current and future youth in foster care, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+, to ensure they receive the support they need to become self-sufficient in adulthood before they age out of the system. LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately represented among youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability compared to non-LGBTQ+ peers. Survey data collected by The Trevor Project found that “LGBTQ youth who reported past housing instability or current homelessness had nearly six times greater odds of reporting that they had been in foster care at any point in their life.” These youth are also at higher odds of reporting physical threats and abuse due to their identity, as well as experiencing food insecurity. Among youth who have been in foster care, LGBTQ+ youth are more

At FreeState Justice, we envision a Maryland where LGBTQ+ people live openly with the dignity they deserve. Facing discrimination shouldn't keep anyone from being themselves. Through pro bono legal services, policy advocacy, resource connections, and community support, FreeState works to break down those barriers so all Marylanders can thrive.

likely to age out independently and to experience homelessness after aging out (Child Welfare).

Past studies have revealed that many of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth in foster care are directly related to their minority status, especially regarding protection from harm and access to LGBTQ+ informed care (Jane C. Paul). However, existing research assessing support needs of youth in foster care and the unique challenges related to LGBTQ+ status is limited. This workgroup would work to fill a critical gap in understanding the problems with our foster care system and provide insight on best practices for further development to improve these conditions. The gap in existing research shows the need to be proactive in our approach to understanding the needs of our youth aging out of foster care.

These statistics are felt at FreeState Justice in our interactions with clients. Many clients who have reached out to FreeState for resources and legal services have experienced foster care and homelessness, sharing challenges related to their LGBTQ+ identity including a lack of LGBTQ+ informed care and experiences in unsupportive homes. For the safety, wellbeing, and sustained success of all our youth in the foster care system, especially our LGBTQ+ youth who are already over-represented in the system, I strongly urge the committee issue a favorable report on **HB0915**.

Sincerely,

Lauren Pruitt
Legal Director
FreeState Justice

Sources:

1. The Trevor Project, "Homelessness and Housing Instability Among LGBTQ Youth", <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>
2. Child Welfare, "LGBTQ+ Youth Face Greater Risk of Homelessness as They Age Out of Foster Care", <https://housingmatters.urban.org/research-summary/lgbtq-youth-face-greater-risk-homelessness-they-age-out-foster-care>
3. June C. Paul, "Exploring support for LGBTQ youth transitioning from foster care to emerging adulthood", <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740920308495>