



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Gloria Brown Burnett, Interim Secretary

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
100 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 768 - DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN CUSTODY - ALTERATIONS - POSITION: INFORMATION

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information for House Bill 768 (HB 768).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventive and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to help Marylanders reach their full potential. Our Social Services Administration implements the Out-of-Home Care program (OOH), which is affected by HB 768. HB 768 would require the state to conserve all federal benefits on behalf of youth in our care and custody, rather than using a portion of those funds to reimburse the state for the cost of their care. HB 768 would also require the Department to provide training for youth as they approach adulthood on how to access their conserved benefits in savings, when their benefits are set to expire, and what benefits they are eligible for after they leave care.

Maryland was the first state in the country to set aside supplemental security income (SSI) and other federal benefits on behalf of youth in our care, and conserve those resources for them until they leave our care. Since the passage of [House Bill 524 in 2018](#), youth in care aged 14-15 have 40% of benefits conserved, youth aged 16-17 have 80% of benefits conserved, and youth aged 18-20 have 100% of benefits conserved. The remaining benefit amounts reimburse the state for their cost of care. After Maryland led the country on conserving foster youths' federal benefits, nine states and Washington D.C. enacted reforms conserving 100% of foster youths' Social Security

benefits.¹ HB 768 would change the amount conserved on behalf of youth in our care to 100%, irrespective of the age of the youth or the source of the federal benefit.

While DHS appreciates every effort to improve outcomes for youth in our care, given the significant uncertainty in federal policy and the escalating fiscal shortfalls forecasted through Fiscal Year 2028, the Department urges caution against legislation that increases expenditures or diverts revenue without sustainable funding offsets. In light of the current fiscal crisis, the State must remain disciplined and strategic in its funding decisions to protect essential services for all Marylanders.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Brown Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary

¹ <https://www.sandiego.edu/cai/advocacy/youth-benefits/state.php>