



## **VOICES for CHILDREN, INC.**

Howard County's CASA Program | Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

8358 Main St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl. • Ellicott City, MD 21043

410-740-0933 • 410-740-0975 • [www.voicesforchildren.org](http://www.voicesforchildren.org)

**House Bill 915 (Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care)**  
**House Appropriations Committee**  
**Hearing Date: March 19, 2026**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Voices for Children (VFC), Howard County's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, is in support of HB 915, which establishes a workgroup on aging out of foster care.

Our nonprofit provides trained CASA volunteers for every child who goes through the foster care system in the county. CASAs are community members from all walks of life who care deeply about the wellbeing of children and become a consistent advocate for their assigned youth throughout their time in foster care. We have some incredible, dedicated volunteers who continue to support these young adults in various ways after they age out of care at 21, but their care and capacity is not enough to make up for the inadequacy of resources available to this vulnerable population.

VFC works with county agencies to assist young adults who age out of foster care with obtaining a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) housing voucher, which provides rental assistance based on income. While VFC staff assist FYI voucher recipients to understand the process of finding and maintaining housing, many of these young adults need significant support beyond housing. For example, several young single mothers previously in foster care must juggle obtaining steady employment while making sure their child has reliable childcare. Having a working phone can be a financial challenge and strain but is a prerequisite to applying for any kind of assistance.

Those aging out of care are not monoliths, and the determination of these young adults is inspiring. Many are resilient and motivated to push through the barriers that come with transitioning to adulthood. Some have more personal support than others. But the trauma of abuse and neglect that led to being in foster care, along with the trauma of being in foster care for many, does not end at age 21. Disrupted education, attachment ruptures with caregivers, and overall instability during childhood heavily impacts young people's cognitive abilities. Additionally, those with learning disabilities or mental illness have limitations that often keep them at a disadvantage unless they receive consistent, high-quality services that meet their needs.


The proposed workgroup in this bill would ensure that those directly impacted can give voice to their nuanced experiences and join the table with community partners and agencies to come up with viable solutions. Understanding which resources have led to success is only the first step in making sure this at-risk population gets adequate support in addition to independence beyond their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 915.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Erica B. Byrne in black ink, appearing as "E B Byrne LCSW-C".

Erica B. Byrne, LCSW-C  
Executive Director  
Voices for Children, Inc., Howard County's CASA Program  
8358 Main Street  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
[ebyrne@voicesforchildren.org](mailto:ebyrne@voicesforchildren.org)  
443-878-2962

Handwritten signature of Serena Lao in black ink, appearing as "Serena Lao".

Serena Lao, M.S.  
CASA Case Supervisor  
[slao@voicesforchildren.org](mailto:slao@voicesforchildren.org)