



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 628 - HUMAN SERVICES - UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME FOR
TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT - POSITION: INFORMATION**

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information on House Bill 628 (HB 628).

With offices in every Maryland jurisdiction, 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 (SSA) implements the Out-of-Home Placement (OOH) program, which is affected by HB 628. HB 628 would establish the Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth Program, which would provide a source of income for foster youth as they transition into independent living.

HB 628 would help address the challenges faced by youth aging out of foster care, which include economic instability, housing insecurity, unemployment, and limited financial support after leaving care. After leaving care, young people experience high rates of poverty and homelessness compared to their peers. In addition, young adults who age out of foster care are more likely to have criminal justice involvement, become parents at an early age, earn less than their peers, and they are more likely to suffer economic hardships. Although youth in foster care have the same educational aspirations as their peers (over three-quarters of 17-18-year-old foster children say they want to attend college), fewer than 10 percent complete a bachelor's degree, compared to a national rate of about 30 percent.

While we appreciate any effort to improve outcomes for youth in our care, given the significant uncertainty in federal policy and the escalating fiscal shortfalls projected through Fiscal Year 2028, DHS 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. Should the committee move this proposal forward, we recommend that this initiative be funded through a mixture of public and private funds, with the availability of public funds being contingent on the receipt of a certain threshold of private funds.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide the Committee with information 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