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SB0402 – Residential Child Care Programs – Education of Children and Training of Child and Youth Care Practitioners

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a Maryland resident and a community advocate, committed to advancing equity for children and families across our state. I respectfully submit this written testimony in strong support of SB0402.

Children placed in residential childcare programs are among the most vulnerable young people in Maryland. Many have experienced trauma, family instability, school disruption, or systemic inequities. When a child enters residential care, their need for educational stability does not pause, in fact, it becomes even more critical.

SB0402 takes an important step in recognizing that education must remain a core component of care.

By requiring structured study time, homework support, access to technology, and encouragement of extracurricular engagement, this bill ensures that residential programs are not simply providing shelter but also supporting academic growth and long-term opportunity. Educational continuity is one of the strongest predictors of stability and future success for youth in care.

Equally important, SB0402 strengthens training expectations for Child and Youth Care Practitioners. These professionals work directly with youth who may have complex behavioral, emotional, and educational needs. Ensuring appropriate training and certification standards elevates the profession, enhances safety, and promotes better outcomes for children. Well-trained staff are better equipped to support trauma-informed practices, academic encouragement, and positive youth development.

This bill aligns with Maryland's broader commitment to educational equity and child welfare reform. We cannot close opportunity gaps while overlooking children in residential settings. They deserve the same structured academic support and high-quality adult guidance as any other child in our state.

While implementation considerations are important, the intent of SB0402 is clear: to improve educational outcomes and professional standards for youth in care. That is a goal worthy of bipartisan support.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0402.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui

Maryland Resident and Community Advocate