

Written Testimony in Support of Amending House Bill 980 – Kanaiyah’s Law Request: Add Hospitals to the List of Unlicensed Settings

I respectfully urge you to amend House Bill 980 – Kanaiyah’s Law to include hospitals on the list of prohibited unlicensed settings for children who have no medical necessity for hospitalization.

Hospitals are not appropriate placements for children who are simply awaiting DSS placement. While these children may not have acute medical needs, they are housed in acute care settings for weeks—and sometimes months—at a time. This practice is harmful, inhumane, and deeply damaging to already vulnerable children.

Children awaiting placement are often confined to an 8x10 stripped hospital room with no window and only a television for stimulation. They have:

- No interaction with other children their age
- No visitation from family
- No consistent engagement from DSS providers
- No physical activity
- No access to fresh air or sunlight

They are isolated in a clinical environment designed for short-term medical stabilization—not for living!

The longest documented stay in our Pediatric Emergency Department was 119 days. The average stay is 40 days.

Forty day!.

Forty days confined to a hospital room without medical need. Without peers. Without sunlight. Without movement. Without normalcy.

This is not therapeutic. It is not protective. It is psychologically harmful.

Many of these children already carry significant emotional trauma. Prolonged isolation in a hospital setting compounds that trauma. The sterile environment, lack of routine, and absence of developmentally appropriate stimulation can worsen behavioral health conditions, increase anxiety and depression, and create additional attachment disruptions.

Beyond the impact on the child, this practice also:

- Reduces bed availability for children with legitimate medical emergencies
- Delays care for medically fragile patients
- Creates significant financial strain for hospitals providing non-reimbursable care
- Places emotional and moral distress on clinical staff who are asked to manage complex, untreated behavioral and trauma-related needs in a setting that is not equipped to provide therapeutic placement services

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Hospitals are designed for acute medical care—not long-term social placement. Using them as holding facilities for children without medical needs is neither humane nor effective.

Children deserve safe, appropriate, licensed environments where their emotional, developmental, and social needs can be met. They deserve sunlight, movement, education, human interaction, and dignity.

Housing children in hospitals while awaiting DSS placement is not a solution. It is a systemic failure—and it causes harm.

I respectfully ask that you amend House Bill 980 to explicitly include hospitals among the unlicensed settings prohibited for placement of children without medical necessity.

No child should spend 40 days—or 119 days—confined to a hospital room simply because the system cannot find them a placement.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to protecting our most vulnerable children.

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