



**BILL NUMBER:** HB 396

**TITLE:** Residential Child Care Programs - Education of Children and Training of Child and Youth Care Practitioners

**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

**HEARING DATE:** 2/11/2026

**POSITION:** FAV

TurnAround, Inc. respectfully urges a Favorable report on House Bill 396, Residential Child Care Programs – Education of Children and Training of Child and Youth Care Practitioners.

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and a comprehensive domestic violence and anti-human trafficking service provider for the region. For over four decades, we have provided survivor-centered crisis response, advocacy, trauma-informed therapy, and community education to children, youth, and adults impacted by sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and human trafficking. We also operate Maryland’s first comprehensive anti-trafficking program and serve as a key partner to state and local agencies seeking to improve outcomes for vulnerable youth in residential settings.

HB 396 strengthens Maryland’s commitment to educational stability and success for children in residential childcare programs by setting clear expectations that programs actively support enrollment, record transfers, and meaningful engagement with schools. We support the bill’s requirements that residential providers ensure scheduled study time, assistance with homework and test preparation, and encouragement to participate in extracurricular activities for children in their care. For children with individualized education programs, 504 plans, or behavioral intervention plans, the bill’s focus on aligning in-program goals with school-based plans is critical to preventing disruption of services and reinforcing consistent behavioral and academic supports.

From our work with child and adolescent survivors, we know that school can be a stabilizing force: a place where healing, social connection, and future opportunity are nurtured when adults intentionally remove barriers and promote engagement. HB 396 appropriately recognizes that residential childcare providers are not only custodians of physical safety, but also partners in a child’s educational progress and long-term wellbeing.

We also support the bill’s expansion of core training requirements for residential child and youth care practitioners under the Health Occupations Article. HB 396 requires Board-approved training

on child development, children with special needs, differences in learning and information processing, trauma-related behaviors that affect learning, child abuse and neglect identification and reporting, suicide risk assessment and prevention, and approved behavioral management techniques, including the use of behavioral intervention plans. The bill further mandates training in communication skills, collaboration with families, psychosocial and emotional needs of children, emergency preparedness, first aid and CPR, medication management, infection control, and food preparation and nutrition, where applicable.

These topics reflect the realities of the children we serve: youth impacted by complex trauma, disability, exploitation, and family separation, whose behavior and learning are often misunderstood when staff do not have adequate trauma-informed training. When practitioners are equipped with this comprehensive knowledge, they are better able to de-escalate crises, recognize signs of abuse and trafficking, support educational goals, and create environments that promote safety, regulation, and healing rather than punishment or exclusion.

TurnAround's Monarch Program offers a concrete example of how residential childcare programs can successfully embody the goals of HB 396. The Monarch Program is a state-licensed therapeutic residential program serving children and youth ages 13–17 who have been victimized through human trafficking, providing care in an undisclosed, safe 24/7 setting staffed by a team trained in trauma-informed care and the complex needs of this population. Core services include holistic assessments and care planning, behavioral and mental health support, life skills training, educational and vocational support, trauma-focused therapy, and individual, group, and family therapy.

Educational support is central to the Monarch model: staff work closely with schools and other partners to maintain continuity of education, support individualized plans, and integrate educational goals into daily programming and discharge planning. Lengths of stay typically range from 12 to 18 months and include a structured 90-day discharge preparation process that evaluates progress toward therapeutic, life skills, and educational goals and focuses on safe transitions to family or independent living. This approach demonstrates how the standards in HB 396—around both education and workforce training—can be implemented in practice to reduce the effects of trauma, prevent re-victimization, and promote long-term stability for youth.

Children in residential programs—including those impacted by abuse, neglect, trafficking, and juvenile system involvement—have often experienced multiple systems that were not designed with their needs in mind. Without clear statutory expectations, educational opportunities can become fragmented, and frontline staff may not receive the depth of training necessary to respond to trauma-related behaviors, learning differences, and safety risks. HB 396 helps close these gaps by clarifying that residential childcare providers must be active partners in a child's education, requiring robust training so that practitioners understand child development, trauma, and

behavioral interventions, and ensuring that state-funded contracts reinforce these expectations by requiring compliance with educational duties and certification requirements.

For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. respectfully urges the Ways and Means Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 396

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