

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0396

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

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Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is David D. Marshall, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 0396. Through my work as Founder and CEO of Journey to Josiah and as a board member of the Citizens Review Board for Children, I have witnessed firsthand the significant gaps in educational support for youth residing in residential child care programs across Maryland.

A substantial number of youth in residential care receive additional educational services through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs). These documents are legal protections, not optional guidelines, and they must be implemented fully and without deviation. Yet, many residential child and youth care practitioners lack fundamental training on what these documents require or how to support youth consistently both in and outside of the school setting.

In numerous reviews, I have seen youth struggling academically with little accountability for their educational outcomes. Study time is inconsistent, homework support is limited, communication with schools is fragmented, and in far too many cases, youth are not attending school regularly at all. The academic outcomes I have observed are deeply concerning and directly impact a young person's ability to succeed after leaving care.

HB0396 addresses these issues by requiring proper training for residential child care staff and reinforcing that education is a core component of care. While residential placements are complex, complexity cannot excuse inaction. Youth must be supported holistically, and education must be prioritized as foundational to long-term stability and success.

Call to Action: I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **Favorable Report on HB0396**. By passing this bill, Maryland affirms its commitment to ensuring youth in care are supported by trained professionals who understand their educational rights and are equipped to help them succeed.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and continued commitment to Maryland's children.