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By: **Delegates Zirkin, Amedori, Burns, Cardin, Jones, Morhaim, and Nathan-Pulliam**

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments  
House action: Adopted  
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CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Child Welfare Services - Children in Out-of-Home Placement**

3 FOR the purpose of ~~declaring the intent of the General Assembly that certain funds~~  
4 ~~be available for certain services when a parent relinquishes care of the parent's~~  
5 ~~minor child to others; prohibiting the Department of Human Resources from~~  
6 ~~placing children committed to the Department in group homes or residential~~  
7 ~~facilities that accept children from other State agencies after a certain date;~~  
8 requiring the Department to consider certain criteria before issuing certain  
9 licenses; requiring local departments of social services to consider certain  
10 criteria in developing a permanency plan for a child in an out-of-home  
11 placement; ~~altering certain goals of a local board of review for minor children in~~  
12 ~~out-of-home placement;~~ altering certain recommendations that may be made by  
13 a local board; requiring the Social Services Administration to adopt certain  
14 regulations; requiring the Special Secretary for the Office of Children, Youth,  
15 and Families, in consultation with the Department of Human Resources, the  
16 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Department of Juvenile  
17 Services to conduct a certain study, develop a certain plan, and make a certain  
18 report on or before a certain date; defining certain terms; making the provisions  
19 of this Act severable; and generally relating to child welfare services and  
20 children in out-of-home placement.

21 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
22 Article - Family Law  
23 Section ~~5-502, 5-525, 5-544, 5-525~~ and 5-545  
24 Annotated Code of Maryland  
25 (1999 Replacement Volume and 2003 Supplement)

1 BY adding to  
2 Article - Family Law  
3 Section ~~5-505~~ and 5-510.1  
4 Annotated Code of Maryland  
5 (1999 Replacement Volume and 2003 Supplement)

6 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
7 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

8 **Article - Family Law**

9 ~~5-502.~~

10 (a) ~~The General Assembly declares that:~~

11 (1) ~~minor children are not capable of protecting themselves; [and]~~

12 (2) ~~when a parent has relinquished the care of the parent's minor child to~~  
13 ~~others, there is a possibility of certain risks to the child that require compensating~~  
14 ~~measures; AND~~

15 (3) ~~WHEN A PARENT HAS RELINQUISHED THE CARE OF THE PARENT'S~~  
16 ~~MINOR CHILD TO OTHERS, THERE SHALL BE SUFFICIENT FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM~~  
17 ~~THE APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT AGENCY TO PROVIDE THE CHILD WITH ALL~~  
18 ~~NECESSARY SERVICES.~~

19 (b) ~~It is the policy of this State:~~

20 (1) ~~to protect minor children whose care has been relinquished to others~~  
21 ~~by the children's parent;~~

22 (2) ~~to resolve doubts in favor of the child when there is a conflict between~~  
23 ~~the interests of a minor child and the interests of an adult; and~~

24 (3) ~~to encourage the development of day care services for minor children~~  
25 ~~in a safe, healthy, and homelike environment.~~

26 ~~5-505.~~

27 ~~AFTER JANUARY 1, 2006, A CHILD COMMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT MAY NOT~~  
28 ~~BE PLACED IN A GROUP HOME OR RESIDENTIAL FACILITY THAT ALSO ACCEPTS~~  
29 ~~CHILDREN FROM ANY OTHER UNIT OF STATE GOVERNMENT.~~

30 5-510.1.

31 PRIOR TO ISSUING A LICENSE FOR A CHILD CARE HOME OR A LICENSE FOR A  
32 CHILD CARE INSTITUTION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONSIDER THE LOCATION OF  
33 THE CHILD CARE HOME OR CHILD CARE INSTITUTION TO AVOID OVERSATURATION

1 OF CHILD CARE HOMES OR CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS IN LOCAL JURISDICTIONS IN  
2 THE STATE.

3 5-525.

4 (a) (1) The Administration shall establish a program of out-of-home  
5 placement for minor children:

6 (i) who are placed in the custody of a local department, for a period  
7 of not more than 180 days, by a parent or legal guardian under a voluntary placement  
8 agreement;

9 (ii) who are abused, abandoned, neglected, or dependent, if a  
10 juvenile court:

11 1. has determined that continued residence in the child's  
12 home is contrary to the child's welfare; and

13 2. has committed the child to the custody or guardianship of  
14 a local department; or

15 (iii) who, with the approval of the Administration, are placed in an  
16 out-of-home placement by a local department under a voluntary placement  
17 agreement subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection.

18 (2) (i) A local department may not seek legal custody of a child under  
19 a voluntary placement agreement if the child has a developmental disability or a  
20 mental illness and the purpose of the voluntary placement agreement is to obtain  
21 treatment or care related to the child's disability that the parent is unable to provide.

22 (ii) A child described in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph may  
23 remain in an out-of-home placement under a voluntary placement agreement for  
24 more than 180 days if the child's disability necessitates care or treatment in the  
25 out-of-home placement and a juvenile court makes a finding that continuation of the  
26 placement is in the best interests of the child.

27 (b) In establishing the out-of-home placement program the Administration  
28 shall:

29 (1) provide time-limited family reunification services to a child placed in  
30 an out-of-home placement and to the parents or guardian of the child, in order to  
31 facilitate the child's safe and appropriate reunification within a timely manner; and

32 (2) concurrently develop and implement a permanency plan that is in the  
33 best interests of the child.

34 (c) (1) The local department shall provide 24-hour a day care and  
35 supportive services for a child who is committed to its custody or guardianship in an  
36 out-of-home placement on a short-term basis or placed in accordance with a  
37 voluntary placement agreement.

1                   (2)     (i)     A child may not be committed to the custody or guardianship of  
2 a local department and placed in an out-of-home placement solely because the child's  
3 parent or guardian lacks shelter or solely because the child's parents are financially  
4 unable to provide treatment or care for a child with a developmental disability or  
5 mental illness.

6                   (ii)     The local department shall make appropriate referrals to  
7 emergency shelter services and other services for the homeless family with a child  
8 which lacks shelter.

9     (d)     (1)     Unless a court orders that reasonable efforts are not required under §  
10 3-812 of the Courts Article or § 5-313 of this title, reasonable efforts shall be made to  
11 preserve and reunify families:

12                   (i)     prior to the placement of a child in an out-of-home placement,  
13 to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child from the child's home; and

14                   (ii)    to make it possible for a child to safely return to the child's  
15 home.

16                   (2)     In determining the reasonable efforts to be made and in making the  
17 reasonable efforts described under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the child's safety  
18 and health shall be the primary concern.

19                   (3)     Reasonable efforts to place a child for adoption or with a legal  
20 guardian may be made concurrently with the reasonable efforts described under  
21 paragraph (1) of this subsection.

22                   (4)     If continuation of reasonable efforts to reunify the child with the  
23 child's parents or guardian is determined to be inconsistent with the permanency  
24 plan for the child, reasonable efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely  
25 manner in accordance with the permanency plan and to complete the steps to finalize  
26 the permanent placement of the child.

27     (e)     (1)     In developing a permanency plan for a child in an out-of-home  
28 placement, the local department of social services shall give primary consideration to  
29 the best interests of the child. The local department shall consider the following  
30 factors in determining the permanency plan that is in the best interests of the child:

31                   (i)     the child's ability to be safe and healthy in the home of the  
32 child's parent;

33                   (ii)    the child's attachment and emotional ties to the child's natural  
34 parents and siblings;

35                   (iii)   the child's emotional attachment to the child's current caregiver  
36 and the caregiver's family;

37                   (iv)   the length of time the child has resided with the current  
38 caregiver;

1 (v) the potential emotional, developmental, and educational harm  
2 to the child if moved from the child's current placement; and

3 (vi) the potential harm to the child by remaining in State custody  
4 for an excessive period of time.

5 (2) To the extent consistent with the best interests of the child in an  
6 out-of-home placement, the local department shall consider the following  
7 permanency plans, in descending order of priority:

8 (i) returning the child to the child's parent or guardian, unless the  
9 department is the guardian;

10 (ii) placing the child with relatives to whom adoption,  
11 guardianship, or care and custody, in descending order of priority, are planned to be  
12 granted;

13 (iii) adoption in the following descending order of priority:

14 1. by a current foster parent with whom the child has resided  
15 continually for at least the 12 months prior to developing the permanency plan or for  
16 a sufficient length of time to have established positive relationships and family ties;  
17 or

18 2. by another approved adoptive family;

19 (iv) placing the child in a court approved permanent foster home  
20 with a specific caregiver;

21 (v) an independent living arrangement; or

22 (vi) long-term foster care.

23 (3) TO THE EXTENT CONSISTENT WITH THE BEST INTERESTS OF A  
24 CHILD IN AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT, IN DETERMINING A PERMANENCY PLAN,  
25 THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHALL CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IN DESCENDING  
26 ORDER OF PRIORITY:

27 (I) PLACEMENT OF THE CHILD IN THE LOCAL JURISDICTION  
28 WHERE THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN RESIDES; OR

29 (II) IF THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT FINDS, BASED ON A COMPELLING  
30 REASON, THAT PLACEMENT OF THE CHILD AS DESCRIBED IN ITEM (I) OF THIS  
31 PARAGRAPH IS NOT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD, PLACEMENT OF THE  
32 CHILD IN ANOTHER JURISDICTION IN THE STATE AFTER CONSIDERING:

33 1. THE NUMBER OF OTHER CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME  
34 PLACEMENTS IN PROXIMITY TO THE CURRENT OR PROPOSED OUT-OF-HOME  
35 PLACEMENT;

36 2. THE EFFECT ON THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM;



1           [(3)]   (4)    require the local department to make appropriate referrals to  
2 emergency shelter and other services for families with children who lack shelter.

3 ~~5-544.~~

4       The goals of each local board are:

5           (1)    ~~subject to § 5-545 of this subtitle, as to minor children who have~~  
6 ~~resided in out-of-home placement under the jurisdiction of the local department for~~  
7 ~~more than 6 months:~~

8                   (i)    ~~to review the cases every 6 months to determine what efforts~~  
9 ~~have been made to acquire permanent and stable placement for these children; [and]~~

10                   (ii)   to encourage and facilitate the return of each of these children  
11 to the child's parent or, on determining that return of a child to the child's parent is  
12 not in the best interests of the child, to encourage placement of the child with the  
13 child's relatives, provided the placement has legal status, or if neither measure is in  
14 the best interests of the child, to encourage efforts at adoption of the child; AND

15                   (III)   ~~IF THE CHILD RESIDES IN AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT IN A~~  
16 ~~LOCAL JURISDICTION WHERE THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN DOES NOT~~  
17 ~~RESIDE, ON DETERMINING THAT THE RETURN OF THE CHILD TO THE CHILD'S~~  
18 ~~PARENT OR GUARDIAN IS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD, TO~~  
19 ~~ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE THE PLACEMENT OF THE CHILD IN AN OUT-OF-HOME~~  
20 ~~PLACEMENT IN THE CHILD'S LOCAL JURISDICTION OF ORIGIN, WHEN APPROPRIATE;~~

21                   (2)    to encourage all possible efforts for permanent foster care or kinship  
22 care or guardianship for minor children for whom return to a parent or adoption is not  
23 feasible; and

24                   (3)    to report to the juvenile court on the status of efforts to secure  
25 permanent homes for minor children.

26 5-545.

27       (a)    Each local board shall review children in out-of-home placement in  
28 accordance with local plans approved by the State Board and the Secretary of Human  
29 Resources.

30       (b)    Each local board shall report in writing to the juvenile court and the local  
31 department on each minor child whose case is reviewed by the local board.

32       (c)    In the report, the local board may recommend, as being in the best interest  
33 of the minor child:

34                   (1)    that the child be returned to the parent or legal guardian;

35                   (2)    that the child continue to be placed outside the home and that the  
36 present placement plan is appropriate to the child's needs;

1 (3) that the child continue to be placed outside the home, but that the  
2 present placement plan is inappropriate to the child's needs; [or]

3 (4) THAT THE CHILD CONTINUE TO BE PLACED OUTSIDE THE HOME,  
4 BUT THAT THE CHILD BE PLACED OUTSIDE THE HOME IN THE LOCAL JURISDICTION  
5 OF ORIGIN, IF APPROPRIATE;

6 (5) THAT IT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF A CHILD TO CONTINUE TO BE  
7 PLACED IN ANOTHER LOCAL JURISDICTION IN THE STATE, AFTER CONSIDERING:

8 1. THE NUMBER OF OTHER CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME  
9 PLACEMENTS IN PROXIMITY TO THE CURRENT OR PROPOSED OUT-OF-HOME  
10 PLACEMENT;

11 2. THE EFFECT ON THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM;

12 3. THE AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES TO PROVIDE  
13 NECESSARY SERVICES TO THE CHILD; AND

14 4. THE ACCESSIBILITY TO FAMILY TREATMENT, IF  
15 APPROPRIATE; OR

16 [(4)] (6) that proceedings be initiated to terminate the rights of the  
17 parent as to the child so that the child may be eligible for adoption.

18 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

19 (a) The Special Secretary for the Office of Children, Youth, and Families, in  
20 consultation with the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Health  
21 and Mental Hygiene, and the Department of Juvenile Services shall:

22 (1) conduct a study of out-of-home placements to determine:

23 (i) the average number of children from each county in  
24 out-of-home placements during fiscal year 2005;

25 (ii) the location of out-of-home placements in which children from  
26 each county were placed during fiscal year 2005;

27 (iii) the types or categories of out-of-home placements in which  
28 children from each county were placed and the number of children placed in each type  
29 or category in fiscal year 2005;

30 (iv) the total number and types or categories of out-of-home  
31 placements that would need to be available in each county or multicounty region to  
32 meet the needs of children who require out-of-home placements within the child's  
33 home county or the multicounty region that includes the child's home county; and

34 (v) the number and types of additional out-of-home placements  
35 that would need to be developed to meet the total number identified in item (iv) of this  
36 paragraph; and

1           (2)     develop a plan for the Social Services Administration to meet the  
2 goals of this Act.

3       (b)     On or before January 1, 2006, the Special Secretary for the Office of  
4 Children, Youth, and Families shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with §  
5 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly on:

6           (1)     the study required under subsection (a)(1) of this section; and

7           (2)     the plan required under subsection (a)(2) of this section.

8       SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That if any provision of this  
9 Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any  
10 reason in a court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity does not affect other  
11 provisions or any other application of this Act which can be given effect without the  
12 invalid provision or application, and for this purpose the provisions of this Act are  
13 declared severable.

14       ~~SECTION 4.~~ SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take  
15 effect October 1, 2004.