

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4

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By: **Delegates Kipke and Griffith**

Introduced and read first time: January 23, 2026

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A House Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Social Services Administration – Accountability – Protecting Maryland’s Most**
3 **Vulnerable**

4 FOR the purpose of affirming Maryland’s commitment to the physical, mental, and
5 emotional well-being of children in guardianship homes and any child under the care
6 of the Social Services Administration in the Department of Human Services;
7 imploring the Social Services Administration to strictly comply with State law and
8 regulations to protect children in guardianship homes from abuse and neglect,
9 ensure facilities are properly certified, and implement certain audit
10 recommendations to ensure the health and safety of children in guardianship homes;
11 and generally relating to the Social Services Administration and the protection of
12 children in guardianship homes.

13 WHEREAS, The State places children under guardianship in instances of abuse or
14 neglect; and

15 WHEREAS, The Social Services Administration in the Department of Human
16 Services is charged with protecting children, assisting parents and caretakers in providing
17 proper care and attention, reducing the risk of continued abuse and neglect, and providing
18 alternate care plans when parents or caretakers are unable to ensure a child’s safety and
19 well-being; and

20 WHEREAS, The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P.L. 105–89) sought
21 to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in foster care, accelerate the
22 permanent placement of children, and increase the accountability of the child welfare
23 system; and

24 WHEREAS, The Social Services Administration oversees the work of the State’s 24
25 local departments of social services, which provide programs and services to approximately
26 24,000 children, supported by roughly 12,500 providers and parents at an annual cost of
27 approximately \$360 million; and



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1 WHEREAS, Children, through no fault of their own, may be removed by court order
2 from their biological parents due to abuse, abandonment, or neglect; and

3 WHEREAS, Guardians must meet high standards of responsibility, maturity,
4 health, patience, and understanding, be at least 21 years of age, complete background and
5 medical clearances, training, and a home study approval process, manage their personal
6 and household financial needs, have independent means of support, and be able to meet
7 the medical, educational, and emotional needs of a child, while also maintaining housing
8 that passes health and fire inspections; and

9 WHEREAS, The Social Services Administration has repeatedly been found lacking
10 in accountability and compliance, thereby neglecting the health and safety of children
11 under guardianship; and

12 WHEREAS, The Office of Legislative Audits in the Department of Legislative
13 Services has determined that the Social Services Administration failed to ensure that foster
14 children received required medical and dental exams, failed to conduct timely abuse and
15 neglect investigations, failed to properly process eligibility redeterminations, failed to
16 pursue provider overpayments, and failed to ensure consistency in payments and work
17 agreements; and

18 WHEREAS, There remains a lack of quality assurance and effective oversight of local
19 departments of social services administering child welfare programs; and

20 WHEREAS, Children are the future of Maryland, and ensuring they live in safe,
21 stable, and dignified homes that support their physical, mental, and emotional
22 development is a shared responsibility of all Maryland communities; now, therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That Maryland
24 implores the Social Services Administration in the Department of Human Services to
25 strictly comply with State law and regulations to protect children in guardianship homes
26 from abuse or neglect, ensure facilities are properly certified, and implement audit
27 recommendations to safeguard the welfare of children placed in State guardianship; and be
28 it further

29 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
30 Legislative Services to the Governor of Maryland; the President of the Senate of Maryland;
31 and the Speaker of the House of Delegates.