



January 17, 2021

To Whom it may Concern:

For almost a century, statisticians, child welfare advocates and legislators have lamented over the disproportionately high number of Black children in the nation's child welfare system (Usigbe & Mendoza, 2016). Although there has been great debate on the causes of this overrepresentation, many scholars have generally agreed that racism and oppression have been a significant factor in this social injustice (Kriz, Skivenes, 2011, Roberts, 2014, Kokoliari, Roy & Taylor, 2019). Racism, oppression and its distant cousin "implicit bias" often lead to racial disproportionality and racial disparity in the public child welfare system.

As a scholarly expert on urban children, youth and families **I am in full support of HB 258 Child Welfare Data Reporting with amendments**. The Appropriations Committee ought to adopt amendments to this bill. For those who have been leading the charge to reduce racial disparities in our great state it is frightening, and somewhat embarrassing, to know that we have not been able to collect key data that highlights the poor outcomes of black children in our public Child Welfare systems. These disparities suggest that black youth fare worse than their white peers on every child welfare indicator from point of entry to exit. Black children are more likely to enter the foster care system, more likely to be placed in a congregate care setting, and less likely to be adopted.

Racial disparities and inequities within the child welfare system can only be eliminated if there is high-quality information by which to track immediate problems and underlying social determinants, as well as to guide the design and application of culturally specific interventions to meet the needs of the family and children the child welfare system serves. Interventions must be targeted across social systems and will require a collaborative approach amongst state agencies to include the Department of Human Services and the Maryland State Department of Education.

I strongly urge the Appropriation Committee to adopt the report with amendments. This will allow MSDE to make key data publicly available. Making this data publicly available is crucial in understanding the causes of the disparities and improving our Child Welfare system as a whole.

Sincerely,

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