



## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: HB 0258 – State Child Welfare System - Reporting

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

DATE: January 18, 2021

This bill seeks to alter the contents of a certain report by the Department of Human Services regarding children and youth in the State child welfare system. The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) has a stake in this proposed legislation because the OPD represents parents and guardians whose children have been or are about to be placed in the child welfare system. The Office of the Public Defender SUPPORTS this bill with amendments as follows:

- (1) Require the Department of Human Services to report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the following information regarding children and foster youth in the State child welfare system:
  - The number of children placed in out of home placements without a Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) petition being filed;
  - The number of children placed in out of home placements without court intervention;
  - The number of CINA cases in which there is a joint investigation being conducted between the Department of Social Services and local law enforcement;
  - The number of children whose parents' parental rights have been terminated but who have not been adopted within one year.

This information is necessary in order to determine accurately the number of children being separated from their families but which the advocates for parents would not otherwise be familiar with because parents are not entitled to representation until a CINA petition is filed. It is also necessary to have an accurate assessment of how many children are actually attaining “permanency”, e.g. adoption, after the Department of Human Services seeks to terminate parental rights and obtain guardianship over the children.

For further information please contact Krystal Williams, Director, OPD Government Relations Division, by phone at 443-908-0241 or by email at [krystal.williams@maryland.gov](mailto:krystal.williams@maryland.gov).