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HB 400 Enrollment Location – Continuity

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members, for the record, I am Delegate Regina T. Boyce testifying on HB 400 Enrollment Location - Continuity.

HB 400 prohibits a county superintendent from withdrawing a child from enrollment in a school that the child is attending due to the child's participation in an educational program that is located in a detention facility, as State-owned and the State-operated facility that accommodates more than 25 youth, or any other facility operated primarily for the detention of youth who are determined to be delinquent.

In November 2019 on a visit to both the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center and the Evening Reporting Center, I discovered a concerning issue. Youth entering the Baltimore Center were being withdrawn from school upon the transfer of their school records to the Baltimore Center from the school system. The Department of Juvenile Services provides educational programs, through MSDE, at the Center. These centers are not schools. The additional concern is the barrier this transfer creates. Resources at the Centers are used to re-enroll students back into school which requires several pieces of documentation: a birth certificate and two or three proofs of residency. And this is re-enrollment into a school the youth was enrolled 15 – 30 days prior.

According to the Department of Juvenile Services, in FY18 youth detained at the Baltimore Center in the juvenile system, on average, had a stay of 18 days. There were 661 youth admitted to detention "pre-trial". On any given day there were about 32 youth charged as juveniles at the Baltimore Center. A majority of the youth are released from detention back to the community. Also in FY18, youth detailed at the Baltimore Center as adults on average had a stay of 149 days. One-hundred forty-one youth charged as adults are admitted to the Baltimore Center "pre-transfer". On any given day about 57 youth are charged as adults. Forty-five percent of the youth charged as adults are released back to the community. This is a rough total of 89 youth who may not be heading back to school.

Youth who come into the system tend to have high absenteeism. Upon entering the system, these youth can receive needed resources for themselves and for their parents to address the underlying issues regarding the absenteeism as well as the underlying issues that have brought them to the center. Note, that this does not occur as it should because the resources are being used to mainly re-enroll youth into school. This is a state issue, not just a Baltimore City issue.

In the year second year of the BluePrint for Maryland's future, no child should be kept behind from receiving a world class education, even those who may take a wrong path. The simple correction of this issue will ensure these youth aren't left behind, and too have access to the BluePrint for Maryland's Future provisions for a world class competitive education.

I would also like to mention that this bill passed this committee (21-1) and the house (132-0) as HB 1188.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge a favorable report, again, please.

Regina T. Boyce