

SB0592_FAV_MARFY_Child Welfare System - Reporting.

Uploaded by: Kasemeyer, Pam

Position: FAV



Maryland Association of
Resources for Families & Youth

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Craig J. Zucker

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: February 26, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 592 – *State Child Welfare System – Reporting*

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is a statewide network of private agencies serving at-risk children and youth and advocates for a system of care in Maryland that meets the needs of children and families. MARFY is a program of Maryland Nonprofits and **supports** the passage of Senate Bill 592.

In 2015, legislation was enacted that requires the Department of Humans Services (DHS), by December 1 of each year, to report specified information regarding children and foster youth in the State child welfare system. The report is to be provided to the General Assembly and published on DHS's website. Senate Bill 592 adds additional information that DHS is to include in the required report that will assist in better identifying components of the child welfare system where the health and educational outcomes require focused attention and possible reform.

The legislation also requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to report specified information regarding foster youth and children in the child welfare system to both the General Assembly and DHS by December 1 each year. Requiring MSDE to collect and report information will assist DHS in its analysis of program effectiveness and the identification of system challenges and need for focused attention and reform. Much of the educational system data cannot be collected or analyzed by DHS. Senate Bill 592 requires that MSDE provide data that can then be utilized by DHS in conjunction with its own data.

The outcomes and success of children that MARFY members serve is often directly impacted by their educational experiences. The collection of data by MSDE and the collaboration between MSDE and DHS in assessing the educational components of the child welfare system will enhance not only the Departments in their evaluation of the need for policy and program changes but will also assist the child placement agencies and child advocacy programs in identifying disparities and disparate outcomes within the child welfare system and work to identify and implement targeted meaningful interventions. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
(410) 244-7000

SB592 MLA Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: LeMon, Erica

Position: FAV



MARYLAND LEGAL AID

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STATEWIDE ADVOCACY SUPPORT UNIT

Cornelia Bright Gordon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Administrative Law
(410) 951-7728
cbgordon@mdlalab.org

Gregory Countess, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Housing & Community
Economic Development
(410) 951-7687
gcountess@mdlalab.org

Anthony H. Davis, II, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Consumer Law
(410) 951-7703
adavis@mdlalab.org

Erica I. LeMon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Children's Rights
(410) 951-7648
elemon@mdlalab.org

Bobbie Steyer, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Family Law
(410) 951-7737
bsteyer@mdlalab.org

Julianne Kelly Tarver, Esq.
Director
Pro Bono Program
(410) 951-7642
jkelly@mdlalab.org

Meaghan McDermott, Esq.
Director
Community Lawyering Initiative
(410) 951-7635
mmcdermott@mdlalab.org

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Esq.
Executive Director

Stuart O. Simms, Esq.
Chief Counsel

Gustava E. Taler, Esq.
Chief Operating Officer

Administrative Offices
500 East Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
(410) 951-7777
(800) 999-8904
(410) 951-7778 (Fax)

www.mdlalab.org
01.2021



February 23, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 592 State Child Welfare System - Reporting

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your invitation to present testimony on SB 592. Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to Maryland's low-income and vulnerable residents. As a part of this representation, MLA's staff provides legal services to over 2,000 Maryland children every year in the child welfare system who participate in Children in Need of Assistance (CINA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings. Thus, MLA has expertise in child welfare matters, including children in foster care and youth aging out of foster care. Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 592 with favorable amendments and asks that this committee give it a favorable report. This letter serves as notice that Erica LeMon, Esq., will be providing testimony at Senator Craig Zucker's request.

SB 592 is necessary because it aims to pinpoint strategies to improve outcomes for foster children. SB 592 will assist efforts to ensure that systemic issues affecting foster children are appropriately addressed. Evidence-based practice is increasingly common in fields such as medicine and public health. However, the child welfare field is in the early stages of developing and utilizing a solid empirical evidence base. The lack of available evidence about specific child welfare policies, programs, and outcomes is one barrier to the widespread implementation of evidence-based practice,ⁱ so accurate information can be reported to the Federal government.

A 2011 study done by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 84 percent of 17- and 18-year-old foster youths report wanting to go to college. However, only 20 percent attend college, and only between 2 percent and 9 percent earn their bachelor's degree. Only 26 percent of foster care youth who attend a 4-year college or university will obtain their degree in 6 years compared to almost 57 percent of non-foster care students who enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities.

Obtaining this specific information for Maryland is imperative to address the needs of Maryland's foster children. Information should be accessible to compare children's performance in foster care to other students', to identify deficiencies. This information will allow advocates to provide the supports needed to increase post-secondary education or vocational training.

Children and youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in this country. Of the approximately 415,000 children in foster care in 2014, nearly 270,000 were in elementary and secondary schools. Studies find that children in foster care are much more likely than their peers to struggle academically and fall behind in school. Students in foster care at age 17 are also less likely to graduate from high school, with only 65 percent graduating by grade 12.ⁱⁱ

Children in foster care experience much higher residential and school instability than their peers; one study showed that 75 percent of children in foster care made an unscheduled school change in one school year, compared to less than 40 percent for children not in foster care. Unplanned school changes may be associated with delays in children's academic progress, leaving highly mobile students potentially more likely to fall behind their less mobile peers academically. Children experiencing this type of instability, including many students in foster care, are thus more likely to face various academic difficulties. The data collected and reported under SB592 will go a long way to collecting evidence-based practices to improve the lives of foster children.

Seven-year-old "Aaron"ⁱⁱⁱ was removed from his mother's care due to unsafe conditions in the family home. While residing with his mother, Aaron attended the neighborhood Baltimore City elementary school. Upon his removal, Aaron was placed in a foster home outside Baltimore City and enrolled in an elementary school near the foster home. Shortly thereafter, the local Department of Social Services (DSS) located a relative who was willing to care for Aaron and moved Aaron to the relative's home, and he enrolled in another new school. Six months after Aaron's placement in foster care, his mother obtained new housing, and Aaron returned to his mother's care. Although in Baltimore City, this new home was in a different catchment resulting in a third school change. Knowing how many foster children have the same or similar experience will undoubtedly help create practices that will have positive outcomes for foster children all over the State of Maryland.

Aaron has learning disabilities and speech delays and requires evaluation for special education services. Changing schools three times during one academic year substantially delayed his receipt of necessary educational services. As a result of these multiple school changes, Aaron is still not receiving the special education services he desperately needs. Aaron's experience is not unlike that of many other foster children throughout Maryland who need Independent Educational Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans. However, it is often very challenging to get assessments for those who need these plans. More data in these areas would assist in policy changes and training.

It is also essential to track reports, services, and outcomes for siblings who are not removed to determine whether those children are safe/stable with services in their home environment, or whether they should have been removed based on the initial report. When children who are the subject of abuse and neglect reports are not removed from their homes, child's counsel and the juvenile court cannot monitor their safety and services being provided to the family. This bill would require the Department to report information regarding those children, as well.

For the reasons stated above, Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 592 and asks that this committee give it a favorable report.



Erica I. LeMon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy for Children's Rights
Maryland Legal Aid

cc: Senator Craig J. Zucker
Stuart O. Simms, Chief Counsel, Maryland Legal Aid

ⁱ Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/practice-improvement/evidence/ebp/> (last visited January 18, 2021)

ⁱⁱ Maryland Department of Education, Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care, <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/SSSP/FosterCareStudents/index.aspx> (Last visited January 18, 2021)

ⁱⁱⁱ This name was changed for privacy considerations.

MD Catholic Conference_SB 592_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: O'Day, Garrett

Position: FAV



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 26, 2021

SB 592

State Child Welfare System - Reporting

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 592. The Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 592 would require the addition of certain important information categories to the reporting requirements relative to children and foster youth in the State child welfare system. The additional categories would help gather information to help formulate later policies for assisting youth in the State child welfare system with such things as maintaining educational continuity and special education services, safeguarding against instances of abuse and neglect, provision of mental health services, and limiting involvement with the justice system.

Foster youth and those in the State child welfare system face unique challenges, as they often must enter adulthood with little or no support system. They must often rely only on themselves to achieve educational milestones. They often lack access to or knowledge of services that children in other circumstances might otherwise be provided.

The Conference thus maintains that any support that foster care recipients and other children who rely on public assistance to guide them is a worthwhile investment in Maryland's future. Therefore, we urge this Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 592.

ACY_FAV_SB592.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Rachel

Position: FAV

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: The Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Rachel White, JD, Child Welfare Policy Director
Re: SB 592-State Child Welfare System- Reporting
Date: February 26, 2021
Position: Support

Maryland's child welfare system exists to protect and care for Maryland's children in a manner that keeps them safe and healthy and promotes their well-being. The children and families served by the child welfare system, as well as the public, must have a high level of confidence that the system will act in a child's best interests and will respond to the child's needs in the most equitable way. Current Maryland child welfare data highlights 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.ⁱ

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.

Currently the Department of Human Services (DHS) releases a yearly outcome data report for youth involved in the child welfare system, disaggregated by race, however there are gaps in the existing data collected. For example, DHS does not make publicly available the stability of mental health services, medication, or the number of youth with an Individualized Education Plan. SB 592 will require DHS to collect this information and make it publicly available.

SB 592 will also require the Maryland State Department of Education to report on the educational outcomes for youth in foster care to include graduation rates, college acceptance rates, school disciplinary data, and IEP data with the goal of creating targeted interventions to improve student outcomes. It is important to note that several of the data points required by SB 592 are currently being collected by MSDE, it is a matter of making the information publicly available. We attempted to discuss implications of the bill with the government affairs at MSDE, however MSDE was unwilling to engage.

To engender high confidence in the services provided to youth within the child welfare system and to deploy targeted interventions, it is imperative that this Committee issues a favorable report on SB 592 as it allows us to best meet the needs of the children and families involved.

For more information on our position, please contact Rachel White, Child Welfare Policy Director at rwhite@acy.org

ⁱ 2019 Maryland's Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Indicator Report

SB 592 Adoptions Together.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Rachel

Position: FAV



To: The Appropriations Committee

From: Janice Goldwater, LCSW-C, CEO Adoptions Together and appointed member of the Maryland State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect

Re: SB 592-State Child Welfare System-Reporting

Date: February 24, 2021

Position: Support

The purpose of a child welfare system is to ensure the safety, security, protection, and well-being of children. For the last thirty years Adoptions Together has worked in Maryland to ensure that children unable to be raised in the family they were born into have the chance for a permanent family of their own. We work in partnership with local department of social services to find parents for children in need of a permanent family, providing counseling services and family finding programs. Over the years we have seen a disparity between the number of black children in need of a family as compared to the general population in Maryland. Current Maryland child welfare data highlights 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.

To fully understand what is happening and what needs to change, we need data to adequately tell the story. Racial disparities and inequities within the child welfare system can only be eliminated when we know where the break down exists. We need high-quality information by which to track immediate problems and underlying social determinants, as well as to guide the design of culturally specific interventions to meet the needs of the family and children the child welfare system serves.

Currently, the Department of Human Services (DHS) releases a yearly outcome report for youth involved in the child welfare system, disaggregated by race, however there are gaps in the existing data collected. If DHS provided data on the stability of mental health services, medication usage, status of IEP's and other factors we would have a much more accurate picture of what is going on. This information would allow us to design and deliver even more effective programing to ensure the success of all children and youth served. SB 592 will require DHS to collect this information and make it publicly available.

SB 592 will also require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to report on the educational outcome for youth in foster care to include graduation rates, college acceptance rates, school disciplinary data, and IEP data with the goal of creating targeted interventions to improve student outcomes. Please note that several of these data points required by SB 592 are currently being collected by MSDE and this legislation will make this information available to the public for analysis.

This past year has brought so many racial disparities to our awareness and now is the time to take action to begin to address the disparate treatment of children and families based on race. To engender high confidence in the services provided to youth within the child welfare system and to deploy targeted



interventions, it is imperative that this Committee support and propel SB 592 to ensure children and families in Maryland are getting the best and most equitable services possible.

If there is any additional information I can provide, you may reach me at JGoldwater@Adoptionstogether.org or 301-422-5125.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

SB 592 CRBC.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Rachel

Position: FAV



February 26, 2020

The Honorable Will Smith
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB592

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Citizens Review Board for Children would like to offer its support of Senate Bill 592. The Citizens Review Board for Children consists of Governor appointed volunteers representing 23 counties and Baltimore City. CRBC reviews cases of children in out-of-home placement, monitors child welfare programs and makes recommendations for system improvements to the Department of Human Services and the Maryland Legislature.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide the Department of Human Services (DHS) with disaggregated data on educational outcomes for youth in foster care. This would allow for an inter-agency collaborative response to any disparities or areas needed to improve outcomes for children and youth involved with child welfare. The Department of Human Services currently provides monthly and annual child welfare reports. However, having additional disaggregated data from other state agencies such as MSDE would make DHS reporting more comprehensive and identify areas needing collaboration for improving outcomes and ensuring that children and youth in the State's care achieve to their fullest potential.

Access to information and educational outcomes education is critical to ensure that child welfare advocates, stakeholders and the public are aware of the experiences and outcomes for children involved with the child welfare system.

The Citizens Review Board for Children conducted a total of over 2200 individual case reviews of children and youth in foster care during Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020. Having disaggregated data would help identify problems that children and youth in foster care face and be useful for advocating for targeted interventions that would improve child and youth health, education, placement stability and overall well being.

On behalf of the Citizens Review Board for Children I urge a favorable report on SB592.

Sincerely,
Nettie Anderson-Burrs, Chair
CRBC State Board

Citizens Review Board for Children
1100 Eastern Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21221 • Phone: (410) 238-1320 • Fax: (410) 238-1395
email: crbc.mail.maryland.gov website: <http://dhr.maryland.gov/crbc>



SB 592 Legal Aid.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Rachel

Position: FAV



MARYLAND LEGAL AID

...;J,ancing
Human Rights
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STATEWIDE ADVOCACY SUPPORT UNIT

Cornelia Bright Gordon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Administrative Law
(410) 951-7728
cbgordon@mdl.ab.org

Gregory Countess, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Housing & Community
Economic Development
(410) 951-7687
gcountess@mdl.ab.org

Anthony H. Davis, II, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Consumer Law
(410) 951-7703
adav1st@mdl.ab.org

Erica I. LeMon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Children's Rights
(410) 951-7648
elemon@mdl.ab.org

Amy Petkovsek, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Training & Pro Bono
(410) 951-7813
apetkovsek@mdl.ab.org

Bobbie Steyer, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Family Law
(410) 951-7737
bsteyer@mdl.ab.org

Julianne Kelly Tarver, Esq.
Director
Pro Bono Program
(410) 951-7642
jkelly@mdl.ab.org

Meaghan McDermott, Esq.
Director
Community Lawyering Initiative
(410) 951-7635
mmcdermott@mdl.ab.org

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Esq.
Executive Director

Stuart O. Simms, Esq.
Chief Counsel

Gustava E. Taler, Esq.
Chief Operating Officer

Administrative Offices
500 East Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
(410) 951-7777
(800) 999-8904
(410) 951-7778 <Fax>

www.mdl.ab.org
10.2020

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Will Smith
Chairman, Judiciary Committee
2 East Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 592 State Child Welfare System - Reporting

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your invitation to present testimony on SB 592. The Legal Aid Bureau, Inc. (Maryland Legal Aid) is a private non-profit law firm representing indigent persons in civil matters throughout Maryland. As a part of this representation, Maryland Legal Aid's staff provides legal services to over 2,000 Maryland children every year in the child welfare system who participate in Children in Need of Assistance (CINA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings. Consequently, Maryland Legal Aid has expertise in child welfare matters, children in foster care, and youth aging out of foster care; Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 592 and asks that this committee give it a favorable report.

SB 592 is necessary because it aims to pinpoint strategies to improve outcomes for foster children and assists efforts to ensure that systemic issues affecting foster children are appropriately addressed. Evidence-based practice is increasingly common in fields such as medicine and public health. However, the child welfare field is in the early stages of developing and utilizing a solid empirical evidence base. The lack of available evidence about specific child welfare policies, programs, and outcomes is one barrier to the widespread implementation of evidence-based practices, so we can report accurate information to the Federal government.

Obtaining this specific information for Maryland is imperative to address the need of Maryland's foster children. Information should be accessible to compare children's performance in foster care to other students to identify deficiencies, which could assist with providing the supports that they need to increase post-secondary education or vocational training.

Children and youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in this country. Studies find that children in foster care are

much more likely than their peers to fall behind and struggle academically. Students in foster care at age 17 are also less likely to graduate from high school; only 65 percent graduate by grade 12. Children in foster care experience much higher residential and school instability than their peers; one study showed that 75 percent of children in foster care made an unscheduled school change in one school year, compared to less than 40 percent for children not in foster care. Unplanned school changes may be associated with delays in children's academic progress, leaving highly mobile students potentially more likely to fall behind their less mobile peers academically. Children experiencing this type of instability, including many students in foster care, are thus more likely to face various academic difficulties. The data collected and reported pursuant to SB662 will go a long way to collecting evidence-based practices to improve the lives of foster children.

For example, seven-year-old "Aaroniii" was removed from his mother's care due to unsafe conditions in the family home. Upon his removal, the Department of Social Services placed Aaron in a foster home outside Baltimore City and enrolled him in a nearby elementary school. Shortly thereafter, located a relative who was willing to care for Aaron, moved Aaron to the relative's home, and enrolled him in another new school. Six months after Aaron's placement in foster care, his mother obtained new housing, and Aaron returned to his mother's care. Although in Baltimore City, this new home was in a different catchment resulting in a third school change. Knowing how many foster children have the same or similar experience will undoubtedly help create practices that will have positive outcomes for foster children all over the State of Maryland. Aaron has learning disabilities and speech delays and requires evaluation for special education services. Changing schools three times during one academic year substantially delayed his receipt of necessary educational services and as a result, Aaron is still not receiving the special education services he desperately needs. Aaron's experience is not unlike that of many other foster children throughout Maryland who need Independent Educational Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans. However, it is often very challenging to get assessments for those who need these plans. More data in these areas would assist in policy changes and training.

It is also essential to track reports, services, and outcomes for siblings who are not removed to determine whether those children are safe/stable with services in their home environment or whether they should have been removed based on the initial report. When children who are the subject of abuse and neglect reports are not removed from their homes, child's counsel and the juvenile court cannot monitor their safety and services being provided to the family. This bill would require the Department to report information regarding those children, as well.

For the reasons stated above, Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 592 and asks that this committee give it a favorable report.

Erica I. LeMon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy for Children's Rights
Maryland Legal Aid

cc: Senator Will Smith
Stuart O. Simms, Chief Counsel, Maryland Legal Aid

-
- i Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/practice-improvement/evidence/ebp/> (last visited January 18, 2021)
- ii Maryland Department of Education, Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care, <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/SSSP/FosterCareStudents/index.aspx> (Last visited January 18, 2021)
- iii This name was changed for privacy considerations.

SB 592 Maryland CASA Association.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Rachel

Position: FAV



Maryland CASA Association

402 W. Pennsylvania Avenue • 3rd Floor • Towson, MD 21204

410-828-6761 • 888-833-2272 • 410-828-6762 F • www.marylandcasa.org

To: The Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Meghan Resler, MSW, Assistant Director for Program Services

Re: SB592- State Child Welfare System- Reporting

Date: February 26, 2021

Position: Support

Current Maryland child welfare data show that black youth fare worse than their white peers on every child welfare indicator. 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.ⁱ These inequities can only be eliminated if there is high-quality, transparent, and accessible information to track immediate problems and systemic social determinants which then can guide culturally specific interventions. Meeting the needs of families and children in the child welfare system will require a collaborative approach amongst state agencies including the Department of Human Services and the Maryland State Department of Education.

SB 592 will address gaps in the existing child welfare outcome data released annually by the Department of Human Services (DHS). For example, DHS does not publicly release the stability of mental health services, medication, or the number of youth with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). SB 592 will require DHS to collect this information and make it publicly available.

SB 592 will also require the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) to report on the educational outcomes for youth in foster care to include graduation rates, college acceptance rates, school disciplinary data, and IEP data. MSDE already collects several of the data points required by SB 592 but the bill will add transparency and accessibility to those efforts by ensuring the data is publicly available.

In order to provide targeted interventions for youth and families in the child welfare system, and specifically address the spanning inequities for the outcomes of black youth, it is imperative that this Committee issues a favorable report on SB 592.

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony. For more information on our position, please contact Meghan Resler, Assistant Director for Program Services at meghan@marylandcasa.org

ⁱ2019 Maryland's Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Indicator Report

SB 592- Morgan State University.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Rachel

Position: FAV



February 26, 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 SB 292 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 Judicial Proceedings 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,

Dr. Michael M. Sinclair
Associate Professor, Chair of Urban Children Youth and Families Specialization
School of Social Work

SB 592 Child Welfare Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Zucker, Senator Craig

Position: FAV

CRAIG J. ZUCKER
Legislative District 14
Montgomery County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Chair, Education, Business and
Administration

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 122
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3625 • 301-858-3625
800-492-7122 Ext. 3625
Fax 410-841-3618 • 301-858-3618
Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill – 592 – State Child Welfare System - Reporting
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 18th, 2021
1:00pm
Position: SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support** of **Senate Bill 592 – State Child Welfare System – Reporting**.

Maryland's foster care system exists to protect and care for Maryland's children in a manner that keeps them safe and healthy and to promote their well-being.

Senate Bill 592 requires Department of Human Services (DHS) to report the following:

1. Incidences of abuse or neglect of a child who, in the immediately preceding 24 months, was not removed from their home following an investigation that found indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect
2. The number of children in the custody of a local department or child placement agency who have a sibling in the custody of a different local department of child placement agency
3. The health and mental health care provided, as designated
4. The number of children not enrolled in school for more than one week immediately following a change in placement
5. The number of children in an institution of postsecondary education, apprenticeship, or adult education program.

This legislation requires The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to publish each annual report on its website and maintain the confidentiality of children and foster youth, ensuring that no personally identifiable information is disclosed. MSDE must disaggregate the information by county, age, gender, race, and ethnicity. This legislation is important in helping to provide data that will help ensure that we are properly tracking the great care our state is taking for this important population.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 592. Thank you for your kind consideration.

SB0592_DHS_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Graziano, Lauren

Position: FWA

Date: February 26, 2021

Bill number: Senate Bill 592

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill title: State Child Welfare System

DHS Position: Support with Amendments

The Department of Human Services (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments regarding Senate Bill 952 (SB 952). SB 952 alters the contents of the Department's annual report on Child Welfare Performance Indicators. This legislation alters the information required in the report by including five additional pieces of information about children and foster youth in the State child welfare system.

SB 952 expands the scope of the reporting requirements originally adopted in § 5-1312 in the Family Law Article during the 2015 Maryland General Assembly. The current report contains 11 questions that are required to be provided and broken out by jurisdiction, race, gender, and age. SB 952 will expand that to 16 questions by adding the following:

- incidences of abuse or neglect of a child who, in the immediately preceding 24 months, was not removed from their home following an investigation that found indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect;
- the number of children in the custody of a local department or child placement agency who have a sibling in the custody of a different local department of child placement agency;
- the health and mental health care provided, as designated;
- the number of children not enrolled in school for more than one week immediately following a change in placement; and
- the number of children in an institution of postsecondary education, apprenticeship, or adult education program.

The Department is supportive of this legislation as it will help Maryland meet federally required provisions in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is intended to ensure educational stability among children in foster care. Increased information about the children in our care and their well-being, welfare, and futures is critical to continue to ensure that these children reach their full potential. The Department believes that these additional performance indicators are essential to measure as we continue

to serve those in our care. The Department will continue to work in collaboration with our sister agencies in obtaining information about school enrollment, health and mental health care, and other post-graduation opportunities.

The Departments suggests one small amendment for clarity. On page 2, line 7 strike “and foster youth,” by definition “foster youth” are children under the care of the Department who are in out-of-home placements and therefore do not receive in-home services.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Human Services supports this bill with amendments as it will continue to provide Maryland with the information necessary to continue providing care for Maryland’s most vulnerable population. The Department respectfully requests that the Committee return a favorable report with amendments SB 952.

Position on SB0592 - Reporting Data.pdf

Uploaded by: Khalfani, Natasha

Position: FWA



POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: **SB0592 – State Child Welfare System - Reporting**

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

DATE: **February 16, 2021**

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 0592.

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.

For further information please contact Krystal Williams, Director, Government Relations Division, by email at krystal.williams@maryland.gov or by phone at 443-908-0241.

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 these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 0592.

Testimony SB592.pdf

Uploaded by: Legal Aid, Maryland

Position: FWA



MARYLAND LEGAL AID

Advancing
**Human Rights and
Justice for All**

STATEWIDE ADVOCACY SUPPORT UNIT

Cornelia Bright Gordon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Administrative Law
(410) 951-7728
cbgordon@mdlab.org

Gregory Countess, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Housing & Community
Economic Development
(410) 951-7687
gcountess@mdlab.org

Anthony H. Davis, II, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Consumer Law
(410) 951-7703
adavis@mdlab.org

Erica I. LeMon, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Children's Rights
(410) 951-7648
elemon@mdlab.org

Bobbie Steyer, Esq.
Director of Advocacy
for Family Law
(410) 951-7737
bsteyer@mdlab.org

Julianne Kelly Tarver, Esq.
Director
Pro Bono Program
(410) 951-7642
jkelly@mdlab.org

Meaghan McDermott, Esq.
Director
Community Lawyering Initiative
(410) 951-7635
mmcdermott@mdlab.org

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Esq.
Executive Director

Stuart O. Simms, Esq.
Chief Counsel

Gustava E. Taler, Esq.
Chief Operating Officer

Administrative Offices
500 East Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
(410) 951-7777
(800) 999-8904
(410) 951-7778 (Fax)

www.mdlab.org
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February 23, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 592

State Child Welfare System - Reporting

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your invitation to present testimony on SB 592. Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to Maryland's low-income and vulnerable residents. As a part of this representation, MLA's staff provides legal services to over 2,000 Maryland children every year in the child welfare system who participate in Children in Need of Assistance (CINA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings. Thus, MLA has expertise in child welfare matters, including children in foster care and youth aging out of foster care. Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 592 with favorable amendments and asks that this committee give it a favorable report. This letter serves as notice that Erica LeMon, Esq., will be providing testimony at Senator Craig Zucker's request.

SB 592 is necessary because it aims to pinpoint strategies to improve outcomes for foster children. SB 592 will assist efforts to ensure that systemic issues affecting foster children are appropriately addressed. Evidence-based practice is increasingly common in fields such as medicine and public health. However, the child welfare field is in the early stages of developing and utilizing a solid empirical evidence base. The lack of available evidence about specific child welfare policies, programs, and outcomes is one barrier to the widespread implementation of evidence-based practice, so accurate information can be reported to the Federal government.

A 2011 study done by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 84 percent of 17- and 18-year-old foster youths report wanting to go to college. However, only 20 percent attend college, and only between 2 percent and 9 percent earn their bachelor's degree. Only 26 percent of foster care youth who attend a 4-year college or university will obtain their degree in 6 years compared to almost 57 percent of non-foster care students who enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities.

Obtaining this specific information for Maryland is imperative to address the needs of Maryland's foster children. Information should be accessible to compare children's performance in foster care to other students', to identify deficiencies. This information will allow advocates to provide the supports needed to increase post-secondary education or vocational training.

Children and youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in this country. Of the approximately 415,000 children in foster care in 2014, nearly 270,000 were in elementary and secondary schools. Studies find that children in foster care are much more likely than their peers to struggle academically and fall behind in school. Students in foster care at age 17 are also less likely to graduate from high school, with only 65 percent graduating by grade 12.

Children in foster care experience much higher residential and school instability than their peers; one study showed that 75 percent of children in foster care made an unscheduled school change in one school year, compared to less than 40 percent for children not in foster care. Unplanned school changes may be associated with delays in children's academic progress, leaving highly mobile students potentially more likely to fall behind their less mobile peers academically. Children experiencing this type of instability, including many students in foster care, are thus more likely to face various academic difficulties. The data collected and reported under SB592 will go a long way to collecting evidence-based practices to improve the lives of foster children.

Seven-year-old "Aaron " was removed from his mother's care due to unsafe conditions in the family home. While residing with his mother, Aaron attended the neighborhood Baltimore City elementary school. Upon his removal, Aaron was placed in a foster home outside Baltimore City and enrolled in an elementary school near the foster home. Shortly thereafter, the local Department of Social Services (DSS) located a relative who was willing to care for Aaron and moved Aaron to the relative's home, and he enrolled in another new school. Six months after Aaron's placement in foster care, his mother obtained new housing, and Aaron returned to his mother's care. Although in Baltimore City, this new home was in a different catchment resulting in a third school change. Knowing how many foster children have the same or similar experience will undoubtedly help create practices that will have positive outcomes for foster children all over the State of Maryland.

Aaron has learning disabilities and speech delays and requires evaluation for special education services. Changing schools three times during one academic year substantially delayed his receipt of necessary educational services. As a result of these multiple school changes, Aaron is still not receiving the special education services he desperately needs. Aaron's experience is not

unlike that of many other foster children throughout Maryland who need Independent Educational Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans. However, it is often very challenging to get assessments for those who need these plans. More data in these areas would assist in policy changes and training.

It is also essential to track reports, services, and outcomes for siblings who are not removed to determine whether those children are safe/stable with services in their home environment, or whether they should have been removed based on the initial report. When children who are the subject of abuse and neglect reports are not removed from their homes, child's counsel and the juvenile court cannot monitor their safety and services being provided to the family. This bill would require the Department to report information regarding those children, as well.

For the reasons stated above, Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 592 and asks that this committee give it a favorable report.

/s/ Erica I. LeMon

Erica I. LeMon, Esq.

Director of Advocacy for Children's Rights

Maryland Legal Aid

cc: Senator Craig J. Zucker

Stuart O. Simms, Chief Counsel, Maryland Legal Aid

¹ Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/practice-improvement/evidence/ebp/> (last visited January 18, 2021)

¹ Maryland Department of Education, Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care, <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/SSSP/FosterCareStudents/index.aspx> (Last visited January 18, 2021)

¹ This name was changed for privacy considerations.