

SENATOR DELORES G. KELLEY
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

—
Chair
Finance Committee

—
Executive Nominations Committee
Rules Committee
Legislative Policy Committee



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3606 · 301-858-3606
800-492-7122 Ext. 3606
Fax 410-841-3399 · 301-858-3399
Delores.Kelley@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR DELORES G. KELLEY
REGARDING SENATE BILL 8-TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE NEED
FOR ENHANCED MONITORING OF GUARDIANS OF VULNERABLE
MINORS
BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE
ON JANUARY 26, 2022

Mr. Chairman and Members:

Senate Bill 8 is here because of grave concerns regarding the health, welfare, and education of untold numbers of Maryland children who are more vulnerable than usual during this pandemic.

Many such children are in formal guardianships, per Subtitle 3 of the Family Law Article, but a much larger number of Maryland's most vulnerable children are likely those in kinship care, a category of children for whom the Department of Human Services had some oversight, responsibilities, but limited budget and/or staff even before the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, the Department depended upon school personnel to report on children whose care and welfare appeared to be questionable. With much of Maryland pre-K-12 public education having been virtual, rather than in-person since the start of the pandemic, we have lost any systematic reporting on child welfare by teachers, guidance counselors, or school social workers.

At the same time, many vulnerable children have had to become caregivers for younger siblings (including infants), as well as for elderly family members, while in many such cases their communities have no broadband service, and families cannot afford internet service, thereby making virtual education impossible for these kids, a negative impact on their health and general welfare.

Senate Bill 8 is here to help foster some systematic fact finding on the welfare and on the mental and physical health of vulnerable kids whose physical, mental, emotional and educational welfare cannot be monitored or addressed unless we know the extent of the problem. It is hoped that some of the federal funds received by Maryland to address impacts of the pandemic will be

SB 8-Page 3

reserved to address the ongoing, physical, mental, psychological, and educational needs of our most vulnerable children, and the Task Force Proposal which is Senate Bill 8 , is offered as a mechanism for clarifying the extent of the problem, and for determining the modalities and budget necessary to address the findings of the recommended Task Force. The Task Force representation is broad, and includes many disciplines and perspectives.

I am including an amendment to add Senator Michael Jackson as a co-sponsor.

In light of all of these considerations, I ask for your strong support of Senate Bill 8.