



Hearts & Homes for Youth, Inc.
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Senate Bill 0255
Public Health-Home-and Community Based Services for Children and Youth
Finance Committee
February 14, 2023
Testimony in Support

I represent Hearts and Homes for Youth, a non-profit since 1964 providing multi services to children and families in the child welfare system. We have seen child welfare resources dwindle significantly over the years causing concern about the future of our most vulnerable population in Maryland.

There is a mounting crisis in the child welfare system including a lack of available beds and adequate services for our youth who are most difficult to place. We relied on sending kids out of state and when we brought them back home, we did not have programs that could meet their needs and thus we see teens languishing in DSS offices, hotels and significant overstays at hospitals which has become a crisis in the community. Not only is this detrimental to our young people and their families, but it causes unnecessary extensive costs for the state ultimately for placements that are not actually providing the needed services for our youth.

To combat this issue and prevent it from increasing, we need better intensive care coordination and high intensity services for families in the community. Resources that existed previously have diminished such as 1915i without a sufficient resolution. The services that are provided by agencies are not properly funded and compromise their sustainability. While there is a price tag associated with this bill, it is far less than hospital or RTC stays and will work towards prevention with the goal of reducing the number of youths in out of home placements.

If we do not pass this bill amongst others aimed to keep families intact and in their homes with therapeutic wraparound services, we are going to see an epic decline of the safety and well-being of our young people and families in Maryland. This alone will devastate communities and ultimately cost the state dollars versus investing in prevention services. For these reasons, **Hearts and Homes for Youth asks the committee to pass SB 255.**

Respectfully submitted,


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President/CEO