



February 13, 2025

House Bill 824 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Covered Individuals – Alternatively Qualified Individuals

House Economic Matters Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the adoptive and foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

We support House Bill 824, which amends Maryland's Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program to include *alternatively qualified individuals*, particularly those providing in-home care through foster care, kinship care, and adoption.

For families opening their homes to children through foster care, kinship care, or adoption, the first year of placement is a critical period. It is a time when children, many of whom have experienced trauma and instability, need unwavering support and nurturing. However, the financial strain of taking time off work to care for these children can place families in untenable situations, leading to disrupted placements and further instability for vulnerable youth.

This bill acknowledges the essential role of caregivers in providing a safe, stable, and loving environment for children in need. By extending paid leave benefits to those who may not meet traditional eligibility criteria but who are nevertheless fulfilling an invaluable role in child welfare, Maryland is taking a significant step toward ensuring the success of these placements.

Furthermore, House Bill 824 aligns Maryland's policies with the best practices for child welfare and family stability. Ensuring that caregivers can access financial support during this vital transition period will reduce placement disruptions, support children's well-being, and strengthen Maryland's commitment to vulnerable youth.

For these reasons, we ask the committee vote favorably on House Bill 824 and help ensure that families providing foster, kinship, and adoptive care receive the support they need to provide stable, nurturing homes for Maryland's children.

For more information call or email:

Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 | therese@ashlargr.com