

## THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

*Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.*



CPMC  
COALITION TO PROTECT  
MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

**HB0824– Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Covered  
Individuals - Alternatively Qualified Individuals  
House Economic Matters Committee  
February 13, 2025**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1996 concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and working together to promote meaningful child welfare reform. CPMC **urges a favorable report on HB0824 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Covered Individuals - Alternatively Qualified Individuals.**<sup>1</sup>

HB0824 establishes eligibility for the family and medical leave program in certain situations in which an individual parent or legal guardian is unemployed or is taking a leave of absence from employment. We are pleased to see that individuals described in the bill who are eligible for the coverage include those providing in-home care through foster care, kinship care, and adoption. This bill will ensure that families who are caring for some of the most vulnerable youth in Maryland do not have those placements endangered in the first, vital year of placement.

The first year of placement with a new family can be challenging and families often need significant support to make it successful. Of all youth entering care in 2022, about 18% were re-entering foster care - meaning that they had been in care, placed with a permanent family, and then entered care again. While this bill does not address all the potential barriers to youth being with a permanent family, this is a straightforward way to eliminate one barrier, where lack of access to leave benefits would result in a family not being able to offer or continue a foster care or kinship placement. Additionally, having more families being able to access this benefit may increase willingness to foster, care for kin, or adopt to help counter the number of families who cite losing basic income supports as their reason not to consider or follow through in opening their homes. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, in 2022 there were 372 youth waiting for adoptive families.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children urges **a favorable report on HB0824 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - Covered Individuals - Alternatively Qualified Individuals.**

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<sup>1</sup> Members of CPMC who agree with this position include Center for Hope, Child Justice, Court Appointed Special Advocates (MD CASA), Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), MD Chapter - American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers - MD, and State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.

