
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB-833
Treatment Foster Care Homes – Child Care Stipends for Private Providers
Senate Judicial Committee
February 19, 2025

As a foster parent in a treatment foster care program, I strongly support SB-833, which will provide childcare assistance through subsidies to eligible foster care families.

My name is Zina Brown, and my husband Michael and I are foster parents in Baltimore County, associated with Kennedy Krieger Institute. We are writing to you today with urgent concerns regarding the inadequacy of current childcare stipends for foster families.

When we first welcomed a foster child into our home, we faced the immediate and significant challenge of securing appropriate childcare. While the center our child attended was exceptional – providing crucial specialized care and transportation, essential given his special needs – the financial burden was immense. The stipend provided barely covered a fraction of the actual cost, forcing us to shoulder approximately \$3,000 in annual out-of-pocket expenses for two to three years. This was a considerable financial strain that added significant stress to an already demanding situation.

Our experience is not unique. Many foster parents, dedicated to providing the best possible care for vulnerable children, struggle with the same financial hardship. These families are often already facing emotional and logistical challenges, and the added financial burden of childcare significantly impacts their ability to effectively support their foster children. Adequate childcare is not simply a convenience; it's a necessity for the well-being and development of children in foster care. It ensures access to crucial resources, stability, and consistent nurturing environments.

Therefore, we implore you to advocate for a significant increase in childcare stipends. This is not merely about easing a financial burden; it's an investment in the future of these children. By providing ample funding to cover actual childcare costs, the legislature will empower foster parents to focus on their primary role: providing loving and supportive homes for children who need it most. We believe that increasing stipends will not only reduce financial stress on families but will also result in improved outcomes for the children in their care. We urge you to consider this matter with the utmost seriousness and work toward a solution that truly reflects the importance of quality childcare in the foster care system.

I urge a favorable report on SB-833

Sincerely,

Zina & Michael Brown