

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB833

Foster Care Families Child Care Assistance Program and Fund Judicial Committee February 19, 2025

My name is Ryan Servant and strongly support SB-833

"I reside in Baltimore City. My wife and Emily and I have spent the last six years as foster care resource parents in the state of Maryland. We have had four children placed in our care during that time period, and all of them have had special medical and behavioral needs that required thorough and comprehensive interventions, targeted behavioral mediation and integrated care strategies requiring highly-specific training from medical or behavioral practitioners in order to meet the care requirements of each child.

We believe that SB833 is a vital step in supporting continuing efforts to provide foster & adoptive children comprehensive educational and socialization opportunities that many other children receive. Resource parents of foster children with disabilities and the children that they serve often face unique challenges in terms of healthcare access, educational opportunities, cultural considerations and social development. This is especially evident in child care availability and costs. There are limited options for children with disabilities regarding early education opportunities, and there is a prescient need for increased financial resources available to resource parents to be able to afford specialized education, especially early education opportunities. In addition, there are both financial resource and availability limitations on summer educational programs, and resource and adoptive parents face challenging obstacles being able to enroll children in these programs.

Resource parents of foster and adoptive children with special needs are often presented a 'Sophie's Choice' of either working more hours to be able to provide sufficient income to care for their children's needs, or foregoing specific opportunities that can provide each child with much needed physical, social or educational development. We ask that the Maryland General Assembly consider our testimony as resource parents as they consider their vote.

Thank you.

Ryan and Emily Servant