

AF Support SB833.pdf

Uploaded by: Avanti Fulwood

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB833

Treatment Foster Care Homes – Child Care Stipends for Private Providers *Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee* February 19, 2025

As a single therapeutic foster parent, I strongly support SB833, which aims to provide child care assistance through subsidies and scholarships for eligible foster care families. Balancing full-time work during the day and some weekends, I have been fortunate to care for a child placed in my home at 18 months old, who is now four years old and has been diagnosed with developmental delays.

When my son first came into my care, I inquired about daycare assistance but was informed by his case worker that, due to him being in therapeutic foster care and the stipend we receive, no additional support would be provided.

As he continues to grow, his diagnosis requires me to supply diapers and wipes for daycare, school, and home. The cost of purchasing three cases of diapers and three cases of wipes for multiple locations is a significant financial burden. While I have discussed potential price adjustments with my daycare provider, I understand that, as a business, long-term reductions are not feasible. A temporary adjustment might be possible, but a year-round reduction is unrealistic.

SB833 would provide much-needed relief for foster parents like me, ensuring that we can meet the essential needs of the children in our care without overwhelming financial strain.

As loving parents, we all want our children, whether biological or foster, to be in a safe and nurturing environment while we work. Even if the state of Maryland cannot cover the full cost of daycare, I believe they should provide some level of assistance to help support families in need.

The financial support provided through this bill would allow me to reallocate the funds I currently spend on childcare to other essential aspects of my son's development, such as educational outing and etc that will support his learning.

I strongly urge a favorable report on SB833. If passed, this bill will provide much-needed child care assistance, helping families create a safe and stable home for foster children without the added financial burden.

Avanti Fulwood

SB0833 CPMC FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Diana Philip

Position: FAV

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.



**SB0833 – Family Law - Treatment Foster Care Homes - Child
Care Stipends for Private Providers
Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee
February 19, 2025**

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1996 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to promote meaningful child welfare reform. CPMC **urges a favorable report on SB0833** – Family Law - Treatment Foster Care Homes - Child Care Stipends for Private Providers.¹

SB0833 recognizes the challenges of accessing childcare among Maryland families and seeks to create equitable ways for foster care parents to access subsidies and scholarships to meet their needs. Childcare is often a significant hurdle, with many families facing financial barriers that limit their ability to access high quality services. Those who open their homes as foster care parents are no different, and with the rising cost of childcare, the standard stipends are not covering these expenses. This is especially true if the child needs therapeutic childcare, which is even more expensive for families to afford.

As advocates for child safety and wellbeing, we recognize the important roles of both public foster care parents and private treatment foster care parents. Any assistance the state can give to help more homes open their doors to these children and keep them open by offering continual support and stability as caregivers is a smart investment. The funds will allow foster families to allocate resources more effectively to meet the comprehensive needs of foster children and allow these young people to thrive.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on SB0833** – Family Law - Treatment Foster Care Homes - Child Care Stipends for Private Providers.

¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Center for Hope, 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), MD Chapter - American Academy of Pediatrics Maryland, Children's Alliance, National Association of Social Workers - MD, and State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.

Arc Support SB833.pdf

Uploaded by: Hallie Rubin

Position: FAV

February 19, 2025

Senate Bill 833- Treatment Foster Care Homes – Child Care Stipends for Private Providers

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Arc Baltimore’s Treatment Foster Care Program we are writing to express our unwavering support for Senate Bill 833, a critical piece of legislation that proposes to review and reallocate a portion of the Department of Human Services’ annual budget to be used to provide child care stipends to certain private treatment foster care homes to cover child care expenses.

Since 1949, The Arc Baltimore has been supporting people with developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling lives with a sense of belonging, purpose and meaningful relationships. The Arc has approximately 800 full and part-time employees and provides services at people's homes, places of employment, day centers, and neighborhoods.

The Arc Baltimore, in partnership with the state and local entities, provides children throughout the Greater Baltimore area with treatment foster care services. Our Treatment Foster Care Program provides individualized, intentional, trauma-informed clinical services for children and families in our community, facilitating healthy development, lasting relationships, and lifelong success.

As a provider working directly with foster families, we have witnessed firsthand the struggles they endure to provide care for the children they welcome into their homes. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center, in 2021 there were 3,635 children in foster care in Maryland. Choosing to become a foster parent and bringing a youth into your home can bring many joys and many challenges. Among those

challenges, is the need to support childcare costs. Currently, many Maryland foster parents struggle to understand the current reimbursement system and information can be conflicting. Additionally, the current system can be delayed in issuing payments, which causes the family to either take on the cost or risk losing their child's spot in the childcare program.

Children in the foster system have all experienced some degree of trauma and need access to enhanced medical, developmental, and behavioral support childcare programs. These programs are often not available or affordable for foster parents receiving public funding.

This legislation would benefit foster children, youth, and society at large. The opportunity to enroll these children in research-based therapeutic early learning enables parents to work; helping to address Maryland's higher-than-the-national-average reduction in prime-aged women in the workforce. But more than that, it gives these families peace of mind as their children thrive. Early learning and preschool have a considerable impact on the health and well-being of families. High-quality programs generate long-term impacts to prevent or reverse the damaging effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), improve access to nutrition, and enhance a child's cognitive and physical development.

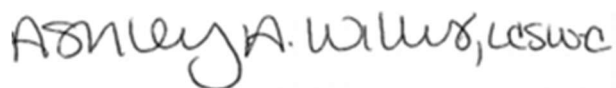
Childcare is often a significant hurdle, with many families facing financial barriers that limit their ability to access high quality services. This legislation is a beacon of hope for foster care families who tirelessly work to provide safe, loving homes for children in need. By offering subsidies and scholarships for childcare, Senate Bill 833 addresses a significant financial challenge, allowing foster families to allocate resources more effectively to meet the comprehensive needs of foster children.

Senate Bill 833 represents a commitment to supporting foster families by addressing two of the most pressing challenges they face: financial strain and access to quality childcare. By reallocating funds to provide childcare assistance, this legislation demonstrates a recognition of the value and importance of foster families in our community. It acknowledges the sacrifices they make and offers tangible support to ensure they can continue their vital work without compromising on the quality of care or their financial well-being. Moreover, access to child care is essential for foster parents, many of whom balance employment with their caregiving responsibilities. SB 833 will provide much

needed support, ensuring that foster families do not have to choose between financial stability and providing quality care for their children.

To conclude, we urge you to support Senate Bill 833 to support foster care families and children of Maryland. This bill is a step toward a more compassionate, supportive system that recognizes the needs of foster families and provides the necessary resources to meet those needs. Your support for this legislation is a vote for the stability, well-being, and future of our foster children and their caregivers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley A. Willis, LCSW-C". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light gray rectangular background.

Ashley A. Willis, LCSW-C
Director of Foster Care & Clinical Services
The Arc Baltimore

HR SB833 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Hallie Rubin

Position: FAV

February 19, 2025

Senate Bill 833- Treatment Foster Care Homes – Child Care Stipends for Private Providers

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hallie Rubin and I am writing to express my unwavering support for Senate Bill 833, a critical piece of legislation that proposes to review and reallocate a portion of the Department of Human Services' annual budget to be used to provide child care stipends to certain private treatment foster care homes to cover child care expenses. As someone deeply invested in the welfare of children and families within our foster care system, I cannot overstate the importance of this bill and its potential to significantly improve the lives of many.

During my time as a social worker, I have had the privilege of working for two different treatment foster care programs. My current TFC role includes working closely with our children and their foster families while simultaneously engaging our families in advocacy efforts. I believe in letting their voices guide our work and giving them the space and tools to make their needs known. When brought together, our foster parents, along with foster parents across the state, voiced that childcare was one of the greatest barriers to fostering.

In my role, I see firsthand the impact that access to childcare has on our families. I have witnessed children be turned away due to a lack of childcare. I have also worked with families who have paid thousands of dollars out of pocket to ensure their foster children receive care that meets their specialized needs. They have listed access to childcare and the cost associated with childcare as one of the reasons they wouldn't recommend fostering to others and as a reason to quit being a foster parent.

Senate Bill 833 represents a commitment to supporting foster families by addressing two of the most pressing challenges they face: financial strain and access to quality childcare. By reallocating funds to provide childcare assistance, this legislation demonstrates a recognition of the value and importance of foster families in our community. It acknowledges the sacrifices they make and offers tangible support to ensure they can continue their vital work without compromising on the quality of care or their financial well-being. Moreover, access to child care is essential for foster parents, many of whom balance employment with their caregiving responsibilities. SB 833 will provide much-needed support, ensuring that foster families do not have to choose between financial stability and providing quality care for their children.

To conclude, I urge you to support Senate Bill 833 to support foster care families and children of Maryland. This bill is a step toward a more compassionate, supportive system that recognizes the

needs of foster families and provides the necessary resources to meet those needs. Your support for this legislation is a vote for the stability, well-being, and future of our foster children and their caregivers.

Sincerely,

Hallie Rubin, LMSW

Hallie Rubin, LMSW

Foster Care Social Worker

The Arc Baltimore

SB0833 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Basler

Position: FAV



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SB0833 Family Law - Treatment Foster Care Homes - Child Care Stipends for Private Providers Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Arrow Child & Family Ministries, we are writing to express our unwavering support for Senate Bill 0833, a critical piece of legislation that would allow Private Treatment Foster Care Parents to receive the same child care subsidies as Public Foster Parents.

As a provider working directly with foster families, we have witnessed firsthand the struggles they endure to provide care for the children they welcome into their homes. Childcare is often a significant hurdle, with many families facing financial barriers that limit their ability to access high quality services. This legislation is a beacon of hope for foster care families who tirelessly work to provide safe, loving homes for children in need. By offering subsidies and scholarships for childcare, Senate Bill 0833 addresses a significant financial challenge, allowing foster families to allocate resources more effectively to meet the comprehensive needs of foster children.

Historically, Treatment Foster Homes licensed by private Child Placement Agencies were not afforded the child care subsidies provided to public Foster Homes. The rationale was that the higher stipend paid to private TFC families would cover the costs. Over time, the rising cost of child care has resulted in this no longer being the case. Many families report that the cost of child care takes up most of not all or more of the stipend. This is especially true if the child needs therapeutic child care, which is even more expensive for families. To conclude, we urge you to support SB 0833 to support foster care families and children of Maryland. This bill is a step toward a more compassionate, supportive system that recognizes the needs of foster families and provides the necessary resources to meet those needs. Your support for this legislation is a vote for the stability, well-being, and future of our foster children and their caregivers.

Thank you.
Robert Basler, LCSW-C
Associate Vice President
Arrow Child & Family Ministries

SB 833_MENTOR_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Joan Smith

Position: FAV

February 17th, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee 2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 833 - Family Law - Treatment Foster Care Homes - Child Care Stipends for Private Providers
FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of MENTOR Maryland, **I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 833**. MENTOR Maryland has been serving children in foster care since 1991, supporting over 225 youth to have a home and familial support for over 47,000 collective nights per year.

Recruiting foster parents, particularly those who care for our most medically and behaviorally complex foster youth, has become increasingly more difficult. Despite heavy investment, state of the art recruiting tactics, and resources, we have seen a dramatic decline in foster families willing to take the journey to serve. Of those families we find who are open to becoming foster parents, less than 5% actually become licensed foster parents. This compares to a rate of 10% from the previous 5-year period.

One of the top three barriers to completing this journey is the lack of child-care and respite services available to those caring for complex youth. This is most starkly felt in our medically complex program. The reason for this is that, to care for medically complex youth, foster parents must have an adequate income while also being available to support the youth 24 hours a day. These requirements, coupled with the ever growing cost of living across the state requiring both potential foster parents to work full time, significantly limit that pool of individuals capable of caring for a medically complex child. However, enabling a stipend to support daily childcare would dramatically reduce these limiters, enabling a significant increase in the potential pool of foster parents.

Having an adequate network of high-quality foster care homes to care for complex youth not only yields better outcomes when compared to institutional and/or congregate settings, but it also saves the state significant amounts of general fund dollars. The average length of stay for a foster youth admitted to an inpatient setting in 2024 was 95 days. In 2024, it was reported that 102 youth were boarded in inpatient hospital rooms all across the state. That's an estimated cost of \$15.5M* in 2024, where youth could have potentially been served in their communities with loving foster families who are trained and equipped to handle complex and challenging medical and behavioral issues, at a much lower cost.

We need to do everything we can to support the foster families that chose to “say yes” to caring for vulnerable youth. This is why we are asking for your support of SB833 and HB1057, which extends the state child care subsidy program to Treatment Foster Care Families. We are hopeful that with deeper investment with this measure and other investments in our foster care network, we can reduce costs and dramatically improve outcomes for our most complex and vulnerable youth in care.

Thank you for your service and support to children and families all across Maryland. We are sincerely grateful for the opportunity to serve the most vulnerable children and families in the Child Welfare continuum.

SevitaHealth.com

*\$15.5M based on the average daily rate of \$1,600 per day in a hospital bed in GF revenue. This estimate does not include total cost of care and additional billable services received.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Saltman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jonathan Saltman
MENTOR Maryland State Director
jonathan.saltman@sevitahealth.com
315-558-2630

SJ updated Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Sherrian Jones

Position: FAV

February 19, 2025

Senate Bill 833-Treatment Foster Care Homes-Child Care Stipends for private Providers
Senate Judicial Proceeds Committee
Position-Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sherrian Jones and I am writing to express my unwavering support for Senate Bill 833, a critical piece of legislation that proposes to review and reallocate a portion of the Department of Human Services' annual budget to be used to provide child care stipends to certain private treatment foster care homes to cover child care expenses. As someone deeply invested in the welfare of children and families within our foster care system, I cannot overstate the importance of this bill and its potential to significantly improve the lives of many.

I have been a therapeutic foster care parent for over 17 years. We have provided a home for many children over the past years and in several cases, childcare has been an issue. It is very disheartening when we have to say no to placements because of childcare. This should not be an issue for **therapeutic foster** care.

First of all, the waiting list to get a child into a childcare center is long and is often not an option due to the short term need when placement arrives. When enrolled in traditional daycare was an option, funds were not available or used at the entirety of the foster care stipend. Then there was a delay in receiving payments, which can be as much as two or three months. For that reason, some day care centers do not want to participate in the care of the child. It is unacceptable that daycare is not reimbursed at the cost of the care. The financial support that I can provide through this bill will allow me to take the money I am putting towards childcare and redirect it to other parts of the children's needs such as education and developmental aides as well as technology equipment to enhance the child's learning, communication and overall quality of life.

By supporting this bill, you are supporting me and the therapeutic foster care community with the childcare services that are greatly needed. This will also take away any initial hesitation if I will accept a child to my home by these services being more readily accessible.

Senate Bill 833 represents a commitment to supporting foster families by addressing two of the most challenges they face: financial strain and access to quality childcare. By reallocating funds to provide childcare assistance, this legislation demonstrates a recognition of the value and importance of foster families in our community. It acknowledges the sacrifices they make and offers tangible support to ensure they can continue their vital work without compromising on the quality of care or financial well being.

Sincerely,
Sherrian Jones

SB833

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB-833

Treatment Foster Care Homes – Child Care Stipends for Private Providers

Senate Judicial Committee

February 19, 2025

As a therapeutic foster parent, I strongly support SB-833, which will provide child care assistance through subsidies and scholarships to eligible foster care families. I work full time and am a single mother to a child who has chronic lifelong medical needs and I pay out of pocket to provide him with childcare that meets his needs.

I have been Peter's mother since his birth and when I returned to work after taking 12 weeks of parental leave, it was imperative that I obtained affordable and reliable childcare options. At the time, I was informed by my son's caseworker specialist, that as a therapeutic foster parent, I was ineligible to receive a daycare stipend, due to the fact that therapeutic foster parents, overall, receive a higher stipend. I was left with no other option than to pay for infant daycare out of pocket, as the weekly cost or tuition far exceeded the monthly subsidy I was receiving. I paid \$13,000.00 for 6 months of traditional infant daycare which I ultimately needed to remove him from in order to protect his health, ensure his safety, and to move him to an environment that would nurture his growth and development. While enrolled in a traditional daycare environment, he was being frequently exposed to and experiencing illness, I witnessed him being struck by another child which resulted in scratches on his face, and he was spending most of his day confined to a crib or bouncing container.

My son's chronic lifelong medical disability renders him ineligible for a traditional daycare facility. He has now been on a waiting list for the only special needs daycare facility that I'm aware of since June 2023 which has led me to opt for live-in childcare for my son by way of an au pair as well as babysitters. I have paid upwards of \$52,000.00 in childcare and related costs, out of pocket since my son has been in my care because he deserves his needs to be met.

The financial support that I can be provided through this bill will allow me to take the money I am putting towards childcare and redirect it to other parts of my son's life that need attention such as educational toys and games to aid in his development, as well as assistive technology equipment to enhance his learning, communication and overall quality of life.

By supporting this bill, you are actively supporting me, my son, and other current and potential Maryland therapeutic foster parents.

I urge a favorable report on SB-833

Rosalyn Johnson

SB833 Kennedy Krieger Institute

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



Kennedy Krieger Institute

DATE: February 19, 2025 **COMMITTEE:** Senate – Judicial Committee
BILL NO: SENATE BILL 833
BILL TITLE: Foster Care Families Child Care Assistance Program and Fund - Establishment
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 883 - Foster Care Families Child Care Assistance Program and Fund – Establishment.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 833 establishes the Foster Care Families Child Care Assistance Program within the State Department of Education to provide childcare assistance through subsidies and scholarships to eligible foster care families.

Background:

On behalf of The Kennedy Krieger Institute, we are writing to express our unwavering support for Senate Bill 833, a critical piece of legislation that proposes the establishment of Foster Care Families Childcare Assistance Program and Fund within the State Department of Education.

Kennedy Krieger Institute Therapeutic Foster Care is a community program which began in 1986 serving children in the foster care who have experience trauma and are diagnosed with emotional/behavioral health conditions, developmental disabilities, and/or medically complex conditions. Our program was one of the first in Maryland. It is providers an alternative to placement or step down from congregate care facilities. As an example, since the beginning of fiscal year 2024 we have place five children from medical hospitals. Our program’s primary focused on treatment and permanency of children. The means children reunifying with their families or kin and when recommended and necessary adoption typically by treatment foster care foster parents. **In fiscal year so far of the nine children discharged from our program four have been reunified with their family, three have been adopted by our foster parents and two have returned to our program after discharge. 5 Hospitals**

*Treatment foster care is a family-based service delivery approach providing individualized treatment for children youth and their families. Treatment is delivered through an integrated constellation of services with **key interventions and supports provided by treatment parent**, who are trained, supervised, and supported by qualified program staff.”* (Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA) Standards)

Foster parents are the key to our effectiveness of treatment foster care. Without treatment parents (foster parents) our program could not exist. In my 40 years working in foster care, as both an administrator and therapy, I have had the privilege and have been humbled by the work of our foster parents. Foster parenting an emerging profession and a calling. Over the years I have shared in the experiences of the near miracles performed by foster because of their skill and dedication. A few examples have been: foster parents helping children walk, talk, feed themselves when professionals predicted this would never happen; foster parents supporting children surviving from cancer; foster parent supporting children living well beyond their life expectancy and when they have died, due to their medical conditions, they have died with dignity and respect surrounded by family; foster parents supporting reunification and in the process becoming members of the child’s extended family continuing to support the child as well as their family; and foster parents making permanent homes for the children with the most complex needs; foster parents supporting children to perform well above expectations in school, through graduation and living independently as the continue to support them through transition to adulthood; and youth becoming successful young adults, raise families and break the cycle

of poverty and trauma due to the support of foster parents. These are the rewards of foster parenting. Foster parents who not only open their hearts and homes but provide skill-based interventions addressing trauma, behavior, and special needs of foster children, transport and attend multiple appointments with multiple specialists, educational meetings, participate as members of the treatment, attending team meetings, support visitation with birth family, court hearings, and multiple trainings necessary to maintain their license.

Over the last 30 years I have seen less individuals looking to become foster parents as the needs of the child in foster care have become more challenging and complex.

A recent survey conducted by the University of Maryland School of Social Work, the Maryland Resource Parent Association (MRPA) and the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) of over two hundred foster parents in Maryland identified the need for greater access to mental health and educational services, increase access to respite, increase reimbursement, increase participation in court hearings, better communication with department of social service staff, increase support in work with birth families and adoption services as well as availability child care. Childcare was seen as the most needed support. This included affordable childcare which would accept and address the special needs of children in foster care. Currently, treatment foster care parents are not eligible for childcare subsidies. Treatment foster care program rates do not include childcare costs, so our foster parents much pay out of pocket the cost of childcare. Lack of childcare is a barrier for placement of children in our program. So too often children must remain in hospitals or residential placements because of the lack of childcare. The lack of childcare is also a barrier in the retention and recruitment of foster parent as families simply cannot afford to take on the financial responsibility for caring for a special needs child even when the family is willing and able. Investment in childcare is not only cost-effective investment but also in investment in the wellbeing of special needs of children in foster care.

This legislation is a beacon of hope for foster care families who tirelessly work 24 hours a day to provide safe, loving homes for children in need. By offering subsidies and scholarships for childcare, Senate Bill 833 addresses a significant financial challenge, allowing foster families to allocate resources more effectively to meet the comprehensive needs of foster children.

Senate Bill 833 represents a commitment to supporting foster families by addressing two of the most pressing challenges they face: financial strain and access to quality childcare. By establishing a dedicated fund to provide childcare assistance, this legislation demonstrates a recognition of the value and importance of foster families in our community. It acknowledges the sacrifices they make and offers tangible support to ensure they can continue their vital work without compromising on the quality of care or their financial well-being. Moreover, access to childcare is essential for foster parents, many of whom balance employment with their caregiving responsibilities. SB-833 will provide much-needed support, ensuring that foster families do not have to choose between financial stability and providing quality care for their children.

To conclude, we urge you to support Senate Bill 833 to support foster care families and children of Maryland. This bill is a step toward a more compassionate, supportive system that recognizes the needs of foster families and provides the necessary resources to meet those needs. Your support for this legislation is a vote for the stability, well-being, and future of our foster children and their caregivers.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 833.

**Paul Brylske Director, Kennedy Krieger Institute Therapeutic Foster Care (brylske@kennedykrieger.org
410-218-8432)**

707 North Broadway Baltimore, Maryland 21205 (443) 923-9200/Telephone (443)923-9125/Facsimile

SB833 Melissa Kurzmiller

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB833
Foster Care Families Child Care Assistance Program and Fund
Judicial Committee

As a therapeutic foster parent, I strongly support SB833, which will provide child care assistance through subsidies and scholarships to eligible foster care families. Without it, it is becoming impossible to provide stable placements for special needs foster children.

My husband and I have been therapeutic foster parents for nearly 13 years. We have adopted 2 children out of foster care and have fostered a significant number of other children, primarily long term placements. When we were initially licensed, both my husband and I were working full time and needed full time child care. While I am now technically a stay at home mom, we still need child care for our foster placements because we have 7 children, ages 4 to 15, the majority of which have significant special needs. Running children to doctors and therapy appointments in addition to biological family visits is truly a full time job! Additionally, I run a food distribution organization that serves over 225 families a week, have my own small business, and host regular fellowship and support groups for other foster and adoptive families.

Cisco Center, a special needs pre-school and before/after/summer care center, has literally been our life line through our fostering journey. We have had at least one child there for the majority of the past 12 years. We currently have 2 children there. Without having access to this resource, we would not be able to sustain foster placements. When we started this journey, full time care at Cisco was equivalent to 75% of our monthly foster care stipend. While not ideal, we were able to make it work. Foster care stipends and child care costs have both increased. Full time care at Cisco Center is now 130% of our foster care stipend. This isn't Cisco Center's fault as the cost of everything has increased so dramatically. It does, however, create an unsustainable situation. We are not able to pay significantly more each month for child care than we receive for the full care of a foster child. Due to our long standing relationship with Cisco Center and local DSSs, we have been able to negotiate plans that provide our foster children what they need, but this should not be the struggle that it is.

While there are other child care assistance funds already available in the community, foster parents do not qualify for them. While there is funding for child care assistance within foster care, it is very limiting, and therapeutic (severe medical or mental health) foster parents do not qualify because their foster care stipend is higher. As already explained though, specialized child care cost is higher than the increased monthly stipend. It really is an unsustainable situation. Without HB1453 passing and relieving some of the financial burden on foster parents, foster parents are going to be forced to say no to placements that they might otherwise accept. This will perpetuate the already dire situation of not having enough qualified foster parents for the number of children in foster care.

I urge a favorable report on SB8333.

For more information, please contact
Melissa Kurzmiller
mkurzmiller@gmail.com

Melissa & Doug Kurzmiller

SB833 Rosalyn Johnson

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV

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

SB833 Zina & Michael Brown

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV

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

SB833_MARFY_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



February 19, 2025

Senate Bill 833 - Family Law - Treatment Foster Care Homes - Child Care Stipends for Private Providers

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) writes in support of *Senate bill 833 – Family Law – Treatment Foster Care Homes – Child Care Stipends for Private Providers*. We are 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 (TFC) programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the adoptive and foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

MARFY strongly supports Senate Bill 833, which seeks to mandate that private Treatment Foster Care (TFC) providers and the families they serve be eligible to receive child care stipends. This bill addresses a longstanding disparity between private and public TFC families, where only the latter currently qualify for these essential financial supports.

Maryland's private Treatment Foster Care families are currently ineligible for state-funded child care stipends, which creates two primary issues:

1. **Recruitment and Retention Challenges:** Many potential foster parents are unable to commit to providing care due to the lack of child care assistance. TFC youth typically have higher emotional, behavioral, or medical needs, requiring more attention and specialized care. Without access to child care coverage, many foster families struggle to balance employment and caregiving responsibilities, leading to high turnover rates and fewer available placements for vulnerable children.
2. **Lack of Placement Resources:** Due to the shortage of TFC foster families, children requiring specialized care are often placed in less-than-ideal settings such as hospital overstay, isolated motels, or group homes that may not adequately meet their needs. Providing child care stipends to private TFC families would help to alleviate these placement shortages and improve stability for foster youth.



Maryland Association of
Resources for Families & Youth

Providing child care stipends to private TFC providers will:

- **Ensure financial equity** by aligning the resources available to private and public foster families.
- **Improve foster care recruitment and retention** by making it financially feasible for more families to serve as TFC caregivers.
- **Reduce unnecessary institutional placements** by increasing the number of available family-based care options.
- **Promote better developmental outcomes** for foster children by ensuring they are placed in stable, nurturing environments.

This bill proposes reallocating a portion of funds currently used to cover extended hospital stays, emergency motel placements, and other temporary housing solutions for TFC youth. By directing these resources toward child care stipends for private TFC families, Maryland can provide a more cost-effective and humane solution that benefits both foster youth and the families who care for them. Estimates suggest that funding requirements for this program would be well below the costs currently associated with institutional placements and emergency accommodations.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 833 represents a critical step toward improving Maryland's foster care system by ensuring that all TFC families, regardless of whether they are affiliated with public or private agencies, have access to the support they need. Child care stipends will strengthen foster placements, reduce placement disruptions, and ultimately provide better long-term outcomes for Maryland's most vulnerable children.

On behalf of MARFY and the children and families we serve, we respectfully ask the members of this committee to vote in favor of Senate Bill 833.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

For more information call or email:

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

SB0833_INFO_DHS.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Sledge Government Affairs

Position: INFO



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Will C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0833 - FAMILY LAW - FAMILY LAW - TREATMENT FOSTER CARE HOMES - CHILD CARE STIPENDS FOR PRIVATE PROVIDERS - POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide information on Senate Bill 833 (SB 833).

With offices in every jurisdiction in Maryland, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) oversees our child and family well being program, which is affected by SB 833.

SB 833 requires DHS to fund child care stipends for private treatment foster care homes to cover child care expenses consistent with practices in place for public foster care homes. Additionally, SB 833 requires DHS to request an amount “at least equal to the amount of funding the secretary reallocated for the current fiscal year” in subsequent annual budget proposals specifically for private treatment foster care homes.

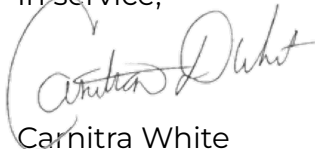
In contrast to the practices in place for public foster care homes, DHS does not directly pay private treatment foster care homes from appropriated funds. Private treatment foster care homes are licensed and paid through Child Placement Agencies (CPAs). CPAs apply for and are granted a rate for cost of care for the child(ren) for whom they are providing a certain level of care. Child Placement Agencies are required to follow the rate setting methodology established by [COMAR 14.31.04](#). Private treatment foster

care rates include a 'difficulty of care' rate issued in recognition of the nature of the needs of the children in treatment foster care homes, the calculation of which is "included in the contract with the private provider agency," per [COMAR 07.02.11.32\(B\)](#). While the base board and care rate is consistent across all foster care settings, however, private treatment foster homes receive a 'difficulty of care' stipend, a direct pass-through of funds. Taken together, the board and care rate and the 'difficulty of care' stipend ensure providers have the resources to meet the needs of children in their care, but child care support for private providers is not currently authorized in statute or regulation. Similarly, public foster care homes licensed through DHS receive a child care stipend, but do not receive a 'difficulty of care' stipend like private foster care homes. As a consequence, SB 833 seeks to "cover child care expenses [for private providers] in a similar manner as public treatment foster care homes," despite the two programs having very different funding mechanisms.. Costs associated with the care of children in private treatment foster care homes should be included in the established IRC rate for the Child Placement Agency.

DHS is committed to updating the compensation for out-of-home care providers through our rate reform efforts. On page 21 of its [analysis](#) of the SSA budget, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommended an \$8.5 million (\$7.6 million in general funds) decrease in the foster care maintenance budget from the Governor's proposed state fiscal year 2026 (SFY26) budget to align with a DLS proposed 5% rate reduction for institutional placement providers. We estimate costs will be \$12 million for SFY26 and reach \$16.6 million by SFY30.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit information to the Committee for your consideration. If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,



Carnitra White
Principal Deputy Secretary