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## *The Maryland House of Delegates* ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **HB 649 Family Law – Children in Foster Care** February 20, 2025

#### **WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?**

This bill requires that foster care parents receive a background report on any child Social Services plans to place in their home. The report will disclose whether the child has had any interactions with law enforcement, including arrests, criminal charges, or convictions. It will also indicate if the child has been involved with or associated with a criminal gang, as well as any history of school suspensions or expulsions.

#### **WHAT PROBLEM ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?**

In July 2022, Kayla Hamilton was murdered by Walter Martinez, a MS-13 gang member. Martinez was placed with Child Protective Services (CPS), which is under the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). Aberdeen Police told CPS that Martinez was dangerous and should be isolated. But CPS did not isolate him, instead he was placed in TWO different foster homes and enrolled in two high schools, Baltimore County and then Harford County.

According to [state law](#), foster parents have the right to receive information about, “physical, social, emotional, educational, and mental history of a child which would possibly affect the care.” However, they are not guaranteed the criminal history of children who may be placed in their home. How can an MS-13 gang member and murder suspect be placed in the homes of foster care families without their knowledge that he is a dangerous violent criminal?

As a former foster parent, I understand the challenges of welcoming a child into a home with my own family, including my two children. No family should have to take unnecessary risks while trying to provide a safe and supportive environment for a child in need. Foster families deserve full transparency and access to crucial information before making the decision to accept a placement. Providing this information not only ensures their safety but also encourages more families to step forward, knowing they will have the details they need to make an informed and confident choice.

**I urge a favorable report on HB 649. Thank you for your consideration.**