



March 3, 2026

House Appropriations Committee

House Bill 818 — Higher Education – Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth – Tuition Exemption and Associated Benefits

Position: Support

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 818.

MARFY represents licensed child placement agencies and community-based providers across Maryland that serve children and families through foster care, kinship care, adoption, residential programs, and permanency services. Our members work closely with youth transitioning from out-of-home care into adulthood, and we strongly support policies that promote stability, educational opportunity, and long-term success.

House Bill 818 expands critical supports for students with foster care experience and homeless youth by requiring public institutions of higher education to provide additional assistance, including housing, meals, and required educational materials, in addition to existing tuition benefits. These supports address some of the most significant barriers youth face when pursuing higher education.

Youth who experience foster care face substantial challenges when transitioning to adulthood. Unlike many of their peers, they often lack consistent family support systems, financial safety nets, and stable housing options. Research consistently shows that housing instability and basic needs insecurity are major barriers to college persistence and completion for this population. Postsecondary supports that include housing and living assistance are therefore essential to improving educational outcomes.

[National data](#) demonstrate that youth with foster care experience have significantly lower postsecondary completion rates compared to the general population, with only a small percentage earning college degrees.

Providing comprehensive supports — including housing and meals — increases the likelihood that youth will enroll in and successfully complete higher education programs, which in turn improves employment prospects, economic stability, and long-term independence.



Maryland Association of
Resources for Families & Youth

From a child welfare perspective, policies like House Bill 818 also support [permanency outcomes](#). When children and youth know that educational and transitional supports will remain available regardless of placement type — including kinship care, guardianship, or adoption — families may feel more confident in pursuing permanent arrangements. Permanency is strongly associated with improved life outcomes, including educational achievement and emotional well-being.

Importantly, more than [half of U.S. states](#) provide tuition waivers or similar higher education assistance for youth with foster care experience, demonstrating broad national recognition that targeted educational supports are necessary to improve outcomes for this population.

Maryland has long been a national leader in supporting youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood. House Bill 818 builds upon that leadership by addressing basic needs barriers that often prevent students from persisting in higher education even when tuition assistance is available.

By strengthening educational access and stability, this legislation supports not only youth success but also the broader goals of Maryland's child welfare system — including permanency, self-sufficiency, and long-term well-being.

For these reasons, MARFY respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 818. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information call or email:

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