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### HB 1559 Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement House Appropriations Committee Health and Human Services Subcommittee March 4, 2026

#### Position: Favorable With Amendments

I am Robert Basler, the Associate Vice President of Arrow Child & Family Ministries, a multi-service non-profit that serves over 500 vulnerable youth and families in Maryland each year, some who have entered child welfare and others who are at risk of out-of-home placement. Arrow provides Qualified Residential Treatment Programs and Treatment Foster Care (TFC), community-based behavioral health services and prevention services, as well as non-public special education. Arrow is a member of the Community Behavioral Health Association (CBH), where I serve on the Board of Directors, and the Maryland Association of Resources for Children and Youth. In addition, I serve on the Workgroup on Hospital Overstays and Youth in Unlicensed Placements.

This year, the death of a foster youth in an unlicensed placement has highlighted the need for adequate licensed, clinically appropriate placement resources for youth. The Workgroup on Hospital Overstays and Youth in Unlicensed Placements, while not having completed its work, has identified a number of strategies to build a more comprehensive placement process and a service landscape that better meets the needs of youth in out of home care and who have significant mental health and developmental needs.

We appreciate that this bill takes these recommendations seriously and we support the bill. We do have some recommendations to strengthen the bill. Primarily, we are concerned that the bill sets the one of the thresholds for referral to the Placement Review Team to be “Any instance involving a child in an unlicensed setting.” This is concerning because once a youth in in an unlicensed setting, we have already failed as a system. Our proposed amendment is that the Review Team analyze when a youth has had more than two rounds of referrals for placement with no provider accepting the youth. This will allow the Review Team to intervene before an unlicensed placement occurs.

Sincerely,  
Robert Basler, LCSW-C  
Associate Vice President

