



BILL: HB 1181

POSITION: INFO – Letter of Information

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

DATE: February 27, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities

217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Barnes,

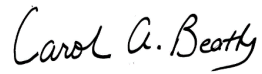
The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is submitting a letter of information for **HB 1181, Family Law - Children in Out-of-Home Placement - Voluntary Placement Agreements**. This legislation would alter provisions and reporting requirements related to children who are placed in an out-of-home placement under a voluntary placement agreement.

MDOD was created in 2004 as a cross-disability, Cabinet-level department in part to ensure that State law and policy supported home- and community-based services for people with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. While the legislation appears designed to expedite out-of-home, residential placements for children under voluntary placement agreements, we recognize the grave importance of the underlying issue that this legislation seeks to address. Data from the Department of Human Services (DHS) indicates the gravity of this situation, reporting that at least 80% of voluntary placement requests in FY 2023 involved children with behavioral health diagnoses or developmental disabilities. The same report noted that initial placements with a Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) provider increased by 15% in a single year.

The State is actively pursuing ways to support children in their homes. MDOD is directly involved with multiple State efforts to examine the underlying causes of out-of-home placement for children and identify ways to support families before such measures become necessary. MDOD has participated in the Statewide Coordinating Council (SCC) (Md. Human Services Code Ann. § 8-401-04) since its inception, which is charged with addressing the needs of children in, or recommended for, out-of-state placements. Additionally, MDOD participates in the Department of Human Services' Social Services Community Pathways Stakeholder group, which was formed to provide an avenue for families to receive direct connections to local services and supports before becoming involved in the child welfare system.

We believe it is the goal of the State to help Local Care Teams and other local partners find ways to expand the community-based resources available to support children in their own homes. While we fully recognize that the needs of families in crisis must be addressed with the utmost urgency, we also caution against altering current processes in ways that could promote non-community placements as the default or preferred solution for children with disabilities.

Thank you for reviewing this letter of information



Carol Beatty
Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities