

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Benjamin Barnes  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
120 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: House Bill (HB) 1559 – Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement – Letter of Support with Amendments**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The Governor's Office for Children (the Office) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for HB 1559 – Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients – Placement. As introduced, this bill would prohibit the placement of children in unlicensed settings under the out-of-home placement program; alter the duties of the pediatric hospital overstay coordinators; establish the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel in the Governor's Office for Children with the Placement Manager as its head; require the Placement Manager to convene a Rapid Response Placement Team under certain circumstances; establish the Advisory Council on Maryland's System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families; establish the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families; and authorize the Governor to transfer positions and funds appropriated for positions from the Workgroup on Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstays to the Office; and generally relating to children in unlicensed settings and pediatric hospital overstay patients.

The Office agrees that pediatric hospital overstays cause harm to young people and their families and ensuring youth do not remain in hospitals beyond medical necessity requires an all-of-government response. Such a response should require the participation of multiple Maryland state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). As the office tasked with building and enhancing cross-agency partnerships, initiatives and programs to support the well-being of children and families, the Office is in support of this bill and urges the consideration of the following amendments in order to ensure the efficient and successful implementation of its key components regarding pediatric overstays.

Regarding the bill's establishment of a Placement Manager housed in the Governor's Office for Children (§8-1403): The Office agrees with the need for a point of contact and lead coordinator in the Governor's Office and instead proposes the creation of a new Senior Advisor for Children and Families position within the Office. Like a Placement Manager, this position would be a

member of the various new entities described in the bill, and would ensure coordination among agencies on this issue. While this position would track case management processes to inform broader policy and systemic decisions, it would not oversee the management of each individual pediatric overstay case – nor would the coordinators in MDH and DHS report all specific instances of a pediatric hospital overstay patient to the Senior Advisor. This shift in the position's responsibilities is necessary to align with the core expertise and capacities of the Office and ensure children are effectively served by professionals with the expertise and skills needed in these contexts. While the Office does not have the infrastructure to provide individual case management services, it is well-suited to assist with inter-agency coordination, and systemic decision-making, while ensuring accountability for results regarding pediatric overstays. In order to ensure that this position can swiftly and efficiently complete responsibilities, the Office also proposes that this Senior Advisor be designated as a Special Appointment, serving at the pleasure of the Governor.

Regarding the bill's establishment of the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel (§8–1402): The Office supports the creation of a Child and Youth Placement Review Panel and recommends the following membership for the review panel: MDH; DHS; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Juvenile Services; Maryland Department of Disabilities, and the Governor's Office for Children – represented by the proposed Senior Advisor. The Office recommends limiting panel participation to state agencies as a large panel with many external entities raises privacy and HIPAA-related concerns; however, the review panel may consult with individuals and organizations with relevant expertise as needed. Rather than the GOC, the Office supports designating MDH and DHS as co-chairs of the review panel as the two agencies chiefly responsible for managing pediatric overstay cases and day to day responsibility for bringing professionals with the appropriate expertise to the table to determine what services are needed to support each child.

Regarding the convening of a Rapid Response Placement Team (§8–140): The Office supports the creation of a rapid response placement team and recommends the placement team be a sub-committee of the Child and Youth Placement Review Panel. The placement team should be co-chaired by the overstay coordinators at DHS and MDH, rather than a Placement Manager, as that position would be replaced by a Senior Advisor in the Office's proposed amendments. The Rapid Response team may include those with direct knowledge of the particular child's needs and situation, including hospital and local care team staff.

Regarding the bill's creation of an Advisory Council on Maryland's System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families (§8–140) and the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families (§8–15): The Office supports the goals of these proposed councils. To support maximum efficiency in meeting these shared goals, the Office proposes creating just the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families, and merging duties of both councils into this one

council. The interagency council will consult with external stakeholders in producing a report to the governor and General Assembly on various topics, including changes to existing laws or regulations designed to facilitate the provision of adequate medical and behavioral health care to youth in out-of-home placements in the state. The Office also recommends that the Senior Advisor for Children and Families in the Governor's Office for Children, as proposed in the Office's amendments, chair the interagency council. This responsibility is in alignment with the core functions of the Office to build and enhance cross-agency partnerships, initiatives and programs to support the well-being of children and families.

The Office applauds the bill sponsors for proposing mechanisms to prevent pediatric overstays and better serve Maryland children. For these reasons, the Governor's Office for Children supports HB 1559 with these proposed amendments and urges a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Andrea Barnes, Policy Advisor and Manager of Legislative Affairs at [andrea.barnes@maryland.gov](mailto:andrea.barnes@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,



Carmel Martin  
Special Secretary, Governor's Office for Children and Senior Advisor to the Governor for Policy