

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.



HB0818 - Higher Education - Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth - Tuition Exemption and Associated Benefits
House Appropriations Committee
March 3, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to educate and promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable report on HB0818 - Higher Education - Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth - Tuition Exemption and Associated Benefits.**

Our coalition has always been supportive of the work of the Maryland General Assembly in passing laws making the costs of college education more feasible for unaccompanied youth or youth who have experienced foster care in our state. HB0818 is an important policy change that supports the transition into adulthood for youth having aged out of the system by expanding eligibility for Maryland's tuition waiver program to include covering the costs for room and board, as well as required books, materials, supplies, and equipment required for their course work.

Providing higher educational supports helps remove a disincentive for older foster children to permanency and reinforces the message that Maryland values stability for all children, including many who are older youth and are less likely to find adoptive homes. Many foster care families consider long-term financial stability when making decisions about permanency. Ensuring access to tuition assistance, room and board, and other associated costs of participating in higher education helps families feel more confident in their ability to provide long-term support and stability. The coalition appreciates that these costs are also to be covered for eligible unaccompanied and unhoused youth.

We do have a suggestion that we hope was shared with the bill sponsor about clarification over the eligibility start time: ***Resided in an out-of-home placement for at least 1 year, and was placed into guardianship, was adopted, or reunited with at least one of the individual's parents on or after the individual's 8th birthday*** (p2, lines 4-6), as recommended for HB0982.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on HB0818 - Higher Education - Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth - Tuition Exemption and Associated Benefits.**¹

¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include the American Academy of Pediatrics - Maryland Chapter, Arrow Child & Family Ministries, Child Justice, Center for Hope, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA - Baltimore County), Citizens Review Board for Children, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers - MD (NASW), and the State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN).