



**HB0628 - Family Law - Human Services - Foster Care Transition Grant Program –  
Establishment  
March 25, 2026  
Position: FAVORABLE**

*Maryland Legal Aid submits written and oral testimony on HB0628 at the request of its sponsor, Delegate Gabriel Acevero.*

Maryland Legal Aid asks that the Committee report **favorably** on HB0628, which establishes a one-year Foster Care Transition Grant Program in the Department of Human Services (DHS). Maryland Legal Aid serves residents in each of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions, providing free legal services to the State’s low-income and vulnerable residents in a range of civil legal matters. Maryland Legal Aid is Maryland’s largest civil nonprofit law firm, representing vulnerable young people in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) matters across the State. The one-year program established by HB628 will help our state explore providing a modest but reliable source of support to help these young adults meet basic needs while pursuing education, employment, and stable housing.

Maryland Legal Aid’s staff represent thousands of children in CINA and Guardianship (“TPR”) proceedings throughout the state. Our attorneys represent children from infancy to young adulthood continuously, while under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, including when the youth transitions from foster care to adulthood. As a result of its extensive work in the field, Maryland Legal Aid has expertise in matters concerning child welfare, children in foster care, and particularly, youth who are aging out of foster care.

For young people who have already faced extraordinary adversity, HB0628 is a valuable and timely investment in the stability of young adults transitioning out of foster care, and in Maryland's future. HB0628 provides youth transitioning out of foster care with \$1,000 a month for one year beginning in 2028. The bill also provides that payments made under the Program may not be considered income or resources for the purpose of determining eligibility for certain benefits and requires DHS to report annually on the Program to the General Assembly. This bill provides much-needed economic security for individuals aging out of the out-of-home placement program.

The challenges facing youth who exit foster care without permanent family connections are well-documented. National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Maryland cohort data shows that approximately 23%–27% of Maryland youth transitioning out of foster care reported experiencing homelessness within two years of exit (ages 19–21), based on the most recent available NYTD outcomes reporting.<sup>1</sup> A study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that between 31% and 46% of youth aging out of foster care experienced homelessness by

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<sup>1</sup>Annie E. Casey Found., Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care: Experienced Homelessness in the Past Two Years (NYTD Outcomes Data, updated June 2024).

age twenty-six.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, one in five youth formerly in foster care have not earned a high-school diploma, vocational certificate or license by age twenty-one, according to the KIDS COUNT® Data Center.<sup>3</sup> By age twenty-six, the earnings of youth aging out of foster care are 50% lower, and their employment rates 20% lower, than those of similarly educated peers.<sup>4</sup> These statistics highlight the significant barriers confronting these young adults and underscore the importance of providing some support in the nature of \$1,000 a month for one year beginning in 2028. This financial support will go a long way in providing essential support for their long-term development and success as independent adults.

Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 628 and urge its ultimate passage. If you have any questions, please contact: Erica I. LeMon, Advocacy Director for Children’s Rights at [elemon@mdlabor.org](mailto:elemon@mdlabor.org) (410) 951-7648 or (410) 935-0937.

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<sup>2</sup> Amy Dworsky, Laura Napolitano & Mark E. Courtney, Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood, 103 *Am. J. Pub. Health* S318, S318–23 (2013).

<sup>3</sup> Annie E. Casey Found, What Happens to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-happens-to-youth-aging-out-of-foster-care>.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Bald, Joseph J. Doyle Jr., Max Gross & Brian A. Jacob, Economics of Foster Care, 36 *J. Econ. Persp.* 223 (2022).