



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**House Bill 980 - Family Law and Human Services - Guardianship Assistance Program and State Foster Youth Ombudsman - Establishment (Kanaiyah's Law)**

**Position: *Support as Amended***

April 2, 2026

Senate Finance Committee

**MHA Position**

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 980.

As amended, HB 980 requires the establishment and maintenance of a guardianship assistance program to promote the placement of children in permanent guardianship homes by offering monetary and medical assistance. Maryland hospital's support the creation of this program because hospital emergency departments and inpatient units are inappropriately serving as out of home placements for children and youth who have been medically cleared for discharge. These youth remain in the hospital for days, weeks, and months because there is no other placement option available.

Acute care hospital beds are meant for short-term stabilization. They were never meant for long-term stays and are not appropriate or licensed for the long-term non-medical care of a child. The inappropriate use of these beds is harmful. Often these youth do have biological family members and guardians involved, however, due to a lack of support, these family members and guardians can feel ill equipped to care for these youth in their homes in the community. Offering additional support to guardians could prevent unnecessary placement disruptions, reduce the youth's length of stay in the hospital and potentially prevent a youth from entering an overstay status.

HB 980 also establishes the State Foster Youth Ombudsman within the Department of Human Services. Too often the voice and needs of these youth are lost or minimized. Having a dedicated ombudsman who can step in to address differences and investigate complaints helps elevate the needs of the youth. Their needs and desires should be the focus of decisions made about the youth's care. MHA strongly supports the creation of this position.

We applaud and extend our sincere appreciation to the sponsor for his leadership and advocacy on behalf of Maryland's foster youth. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 980 as amended.

For more information, please contact:

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