

**MYJC\_FAV\_HB 915\_JPR.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alice Wilkerson

Position: FAV



**HB 915 - Workgroup on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care  
Favorable  
April 3, 2026**

To the Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Youth Justice Coalition strongly supports HB 915, as amended by the House, and is proud to be named as a member of the proposed Workgroup on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Each year, young people in Maryland age out of the foster care system without the stable foundation many of their peers can rely on. Too often, they face immediate barriers to housing, education, employment, and health care—basic needs that are critical to a successful transition into adulthood. These challenges are not the result of individual failure, but of gaps in the systems meant to support them.

HB 915 is an important step toward addressing those gaps. By bringing together stakeholders to assess existing resources, evaluate their effectiveness, and identify where young people are falling through the cracks, this workgroup will help Maryland move from fragmented support to a more coordinated, youth-centered approach.

Importantly, the bill recognizes that we must listen to and learn from young people themselves—understanding which resources they actually need, want, use, trust, and why. It also prioritizes identifying proven programs and practical solutions that can be scaled to improve outcomes. We applaud the House for adding meaningful stipends for members with lived experience who participate in the workgroup.

This work cannot wait. Without intentional action, too many young people aging out of foster care will continue to experience housing instability, economic insecurity, and unmet health needs.

HB 915 lays the groundwork for smarter policy, stronger coordination, and better outcomes. We urge a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.

**HB0915\_MHAMD\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ann Geddes

Position: FAV

**HB 915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

April 3, 2026

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HB 915.

HB 915 would establish a workgroup to study and make recommendations on how Maryland can better support youth aging out of foster care.

Unfortunately, some youth who enter foster care never achieve reunification with their birth families. Nor are they adopted by another family. In these cases, a youth is said to age out of foster care, and they are likely to face significant challenges that impact their life course.

Youth who age out of foster care are more likely than their peers to have behavioral, mental and physical health issues. They are more likely to experience housing instability, joblessness, academic difficulties, early parenthood, and substance use.<sup>1</sup> In Maryland in 2023, 12% of those children who exited foster care aged out of foster care (171 youth), which is four percentage points higher than the national average.<sup>2</sup>

These young adults need a robust system of supports to help them overcome some of the many challenges they face and achieve what comes more easily to young adults who have the support of a family. Maryland has done much over the years to help young adult aging out of foster care, including implementing extended foster care to age 21, developing independent living programs, and providing funding for continuing education. There are other programs that have been adopted in other states that Maryland could look to, such as establishing navigators to help youth access an array of public benefits, including those that are uniquely available to youth aging out of foster care, wraparound services, and matching savings programs.

While Maryland has done much, there is more we could do to improve outcomes for youth aging out of foster care, therefore we urge a favorable report on HB 915.

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<sup>1</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. What Happens to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care (November, 2025). <https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-happens-to-youth-aging-out-of-foster-care>

<sup>2</sup> Annie E, Casey Foundation. Kids County Data Center (2023). <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/6277-children-exiting-foster-care-by-exit-reason?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/2/2-53/true/2545/2632/13050,13051>

# **HB0915\_Workgroup\_on\_Aging\_out\_of\_Foster\_Care\_FAV.p**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY FOR HB0915 Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Hill

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0915 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members are very supportive of the youth in Maryland, and in particular, those who are disadvantaged. Youth graduating from foster care programs need a lot of services and programs to help them transition into functioning adults.

In Maryland, we have created programs to help youth coming out of foster care to become successful. What we haven't been about to figure out, is whether those programs are effective and what changes we would have to make to increase the success rate for our foster care youth.

This bill would create a workgroup to:

- identify the types of resources currently available for youth who have aged out of foster care to achieve self-sufficiency, including stable housing, food security, reliable transportation, educational programs, employment, physical and behavioral health care services, disability accommodations, financial resources, and other services to address basic needs
- determine the effectiveness of currently available resources, and identify challenges with current services and programs that are offered before a youth ages-out of the system and seek to assist youth to successfully transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency
- determine the types of resources that youth who have aged out of foster 11 care are most likely to utilize when seeking continuing support, such as adults, peers, financial assistance organizations, and community groups
- identify the circumstances under which youth in foster care were removed from the youth's home county during any period of foster care
- identify programs that have successfully improved outcomes for youth who have aged out of foster care, such as a hotline or an anonymous support line

Our members approve of this approach to follow up and ensure that what we are doing is effective. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

**Senate.Testimony HB 0915 CRBC 04032026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Crystal Young

Position: FAV



**HB915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

**House Appropriations Committee**

**April 3, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Senator Will Smith, Chair  
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
April 3, 2026

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) expresses support for **HB0915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

**HB0915** - Establishing the Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to identify the types of resources available for youth who have aged out of foster care to help them achieve self-sufficiency, determine the effectiveness of currently available resources and identify the challenges with current services and programs offered before a youth ages out of the system; and requiring the workgroup to submit a report of its findings. CRBC is pleased with the recommendation for the Department of Human Services to provide a one-time stipend of \$2,000 for the young people participating in the workgroup.

CRBC reviews cases of children across the entire state of Maryland in all 24 jurisdictions for youth in Out-of-Home Placement, monitors child welfare programs and makes recommendations for system improvements. Although CRBC is housed within the Department of Human Services (DHS) organizational structure, it is an independent entity overseen by its State Board.

Below are some highlights from the Annual FY2025 Report for CRBC:

*Ready by 21 Independent Living Services*

- 217 (56%) youths received appropriate services to adequately prepare for independent living when they leave out of home care.
- 199 (51%) of the youths completed a Life Skills Assessment.
- 207 (53%) of the youths received required independent living skills.

The Local Boards agreed that 201 (52%) of the 388 cases the youths received appropriate Independent Living Skills to prepare for transition to successful adulthood.

*Employment (Age 14 and Older)*

- 140 (36%) of youth participated in paid or unpaid work experience.
- 137 (35%) of 388 youths participated in paid or unpaid work relevant to career field of choice.
- 135 (35%) of youth were referred by caseworkers to summer or year-round training and employment opportunities.

**Citizens Review Board for Children**

**1100 Eastern Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21221 • Phone: (410) 238-1320 • Fax: (410) 238-1395**  
email: [crbc.mail.maryland.gov](mailto:crbc.mail.maryland.gov) website: <http://dhr.maryland.gov/crbc>



- 41 youths were identified as being 20 years old and earning a living wage.

The Local Boards agreed that in 157 (40%) of the 388 cases that the children/youths were being appropriately prepared to meet employment goals.

**HB0915** will allow our agency to staff the workgroup with several governmental entities, community partners and youth with lived experience as well as though still in care that will make meaningful recommendations to change the trajectory of youth aging out of foster care. Older youth aging out of care present with persistent complexities. Similarly, exploring new and innovative strategies and ways to engage and work with older youth would support improved outcomes and preparedness for transitioning youth or emerging adults. For this reason, the Citizens Review Board for Children urges a favorable report for **HB0915**.

# **HB0915 CPMC FAV JPR.pdf**

Uploaded by: Diana Philip

Position: FAV

## 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.*



### **HB915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

#### **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**April 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 HB0915 - Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care.**

Emerging adults who age out of out-of-home care - exiting the state foster care system without a permanent family - face significantly higher risks of housing instability, unemployment, and behavioral health challenges. Many young people in out-of-home placements also lose connections with family members and lack consistent relationships with supportive adults. In FY2024, 1,483 children exited Maryland foster care, of whom 252 aged out – at an approximate 17% rate. In the same year, 176,745 children exited care across the nation, with 15,379 aging out – approximately at 9%.<sup>1</sup> This disparity highlights the need for ample transition supports in our state.

Our coalition appreciates all that the Maryland General Assembly has accomplished over the years to support youth having experienced out-of-home care. There are some bills this session that touch on ways to advance young peoples' personal goals **before they age out** of the system, such as clarifying reasonable efforts and plans to meet basic needs and realize self-sufficiency, making the costs of college education and vocational programs more feasible, and gaining access to eligible benefits to jump start long-term financial security. Although programs exist to support young adults preparing to leave foster care, the transition to fortify and maintain independence often remains fragmented and difficult to navigate.

Over the years, we have observed how youth are often the objects of public policy, and rarely the agents of it. HB0915 seeks to bring 15 young people, ages 18 to 25 who are in the process of or have already aged out of the Maryland foster care system, together in a workgroup with state agencies, service providers, and advocates to identify supportive mechanisms for **after leaving the system**. The House amended the bill to allow stipends for participating youth.

Our coalition members have been approached with ideas to help youth – ranging from digital apps with information about resources to hotlines or text lines to community networks of retired volunteers. However, to do this right, we need to be informed by young people with

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, Children's Bureau - Children Exiting Foster Care  
[https://tableau-public.acf.gov/views/afcars\\_dashboard\\_main\\_page/exits-exitreason?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Amobile=true](https://tableau-public.acf.gov/views/afcars_dashboard_main_page/exits-exitreason?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Amobile=true)

lived experience their ideas and perspectives to consider possible options, feasibility, and usefulness – with an eye of what could be replicable across all jurisdictions. For example, a Maryland survey of foster care alumni in the rural mid-shore region found that while many youth had secure housing for the first three months after exiting care, the majority soon struggled to afford rent. As a result, 100% reported experiencing housing instability and 99% had stayed in emergency shelters within six months of leaving care.<sup>2</sup>

Including youth voices helps ensure that recommendations reflect the real barriers young people face entering adulthood. The workgroup will review existing resources and identify gaps in services related to housing stability, food security, transportation, employment, education, healthcare, and more. This evaluation will help provide a clearer understanding of how current systems support youth and where improvements are needed. Equally important is the workgroup's role in identifying programs that have successfully improved outcomes for youth leaving foster care as well as those in the first few years after. By examining effective models and highlighting supports that do work, Maryland can strengthen pathways toward stability and self-sufficiency for young adults transitioning out of the foster care system.

The workgroup will be staffed by the Citizen's Review Board for Children, which reviews cases of foster care children across Maryland in all 24 jurisdictions. Such reviews often reveal challenges young people face in preparing to age out of care. The workgroup will be tasked with:

- identifying the types of resources available for youth to help them achieve self-sufficiency and successfully transition into adulthood,
- learning about the effectiveness of available resources and the challenges in accessing current services and programs,
- determining types of resources that youth who have aged out are most likely to utilize,
- identifying programs that that have successfully improved outcomes for youth who have aged out of foster care, and
- submitting a report of its findings and recommendations by July 1, 2027, to help inform policy reform ideas, implementation efforts, as well as emergent issues that the state should be addressing.

We welcome any efforts to further the success of these young people who have been placed in the care of the state. It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on HB0915 - Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Harburger, D.S. & Greeno, E. J. (2016). Thrive@25 Phase 1: Maryland's Planning Grant to End and Prevent Homelessness for Youth with Foster Care Histories on the Rural Mid-Shore. (Final Report). Baltimore, MD: The Institute for Innovation & Implementation, University of Maryland School of Social Work. For more information, visit: <https://www.youthreachmd.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/YRMD-Foster-Youth-Policy-Paper.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include the American Academy of Pediatrics - MD Chapter, The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region, Arrow Child & Family Ministries, Center for Hope, Child Justice, Citizens Review Board for Children, CASA of Baltimore County, Inc., The Family Tree, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Legal Aid, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers-MD, State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, and individual members of the coalition.

# **Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAV\_HB915\_SenateCross**

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



**April 3, 2026**

**House Bill 915  
Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**House Bill 915** establishes the Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to identify the types of resources available for youth who have aged out of foster care to help them achieve self-sufficiency, determine the effectiveness of currently available resources and identify the challenges with current services and programs offered before a youth ages out of the system; and requiring the Workgroup to submit a report of its findings and recommendations by July 1, 2027, to the General Assembly.

When young people age out of foster care, they often lose the structured support of the state and may face significant barriers to accessing housing assistance, education support, employment services, and healthcare. Without coordinated guidance, many struggle to navigate adulthood independently. This legislation seeks to identify and address those service gaps so that youth are not left without critical support at the moment they age out of foster care.

Young adults aging out of foster care face a heightened risk of chronic poverty. By age 18—or 21 in some jurisdictions—these individuals lose the structured support of the state, often without a reliable safety net to guide them into adulthood. Of the 20,000 young adults who exit foster care each year, an estimated 97% immediately experience chronic poverty.<sup>1</sup> The instability of transitioning out of foster care, coupled with economic hardships, increases their vulnerability to financial insecurity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forothers.com/freedom-from-chronic-poverty/#:~:text=For%20young%20adults%20aging%20out,stability%20provided%20by%20the%20state.>

The principles of subsidiarity and solidarity call for upholding fundamental human rights, including access to food, housing, medical care, and essential social services.<sup>2</sup> Establishing this Workgroup is a practical step toward strengthening those supports. By evaluating existing programs and recommending improvements, the legislation aims to create a more stable transition to adulthood—helping former foster youth build independence, achieve self-sufficiency, and become thriving members of their communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 915**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/world-day-poor-be-poor-those-you-serve-pope-says>

**2026 Crossfile HB915 NAPNAP.pdf**

Uploaded by: JD Murphy

Position: FAV



April 1st, 2026

Maryland Senate  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) Maryland Chesapeake Chapter, we are writing to express our **support of House Bill 915 Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**. Maryland's youth transitioning out of foster care face well-documented risks related to health access, mental health needs, chronic disease management, reproductive health, and discontinuity of care. A dedicated workgroup is an important step toward improving coordination and outcomes during this critical transition period.

We would like to thank the bill sponsors for including our prior request for amendment to add a representative from the Maryland Chapter of NAPNAP, which has strengthened this bill. Pediatric-focused APRNs care for children and adolescents in foster care across primary care, specialty care, emergency, school-based, and community settings. We routinely address trauma-related health needs, behavioral health conditions, medication management, immunizations, and the transition from pediatric to adult health systems. Our clinical experience can help ensure the workgroup's recommendations are practical, evidence-based, and centered on the needs of youth.

Young people who age out of foster care face significant health and social risks, including higher rates of mental health conditions, substance use, chronic illness, unstable housing, unemployment, and gaps in continuity of health care. Many lack family supports and struggle to navigate complex systems of adult services. These vulnerabilities contribute to poorer long-term health outcomes and increased use of emergency and safety-net services. A multidisciplinary, evidence-informed workgroup is a crucial step toward creating effective strategies that improve health care transitions, preventive services, and supports for this population. NAPNAP stands ready to contribute clinical expertise to the workgroup or related stakeholder activities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP extends their **support to HB 915 Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care and requests a favorable report**. The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The Maryland Chapter of NAPNAP membership includes over 200 primary and acute care pediatric nurse practitioners who are committed to improving the health and advocating for our state's pediatric patients. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Maryland Chapter legislative chair, Dr. JD Murphy, at [mdchesnapnapleg@outlook.com](mailto:mdchesnapnapleg@outlook.com).

Sincerely,

Dr. Jessica D. Murphy DNP, CPNP-AC, CPHON, CNE  
Maryland Chapter Legislative Chair

Dr. Evgenia Ogorodova DNP, CPNP-PC  
Chapter Legislative Co-Chair

Dr. Yvette Laboy DNP, CPNP-AC,  
CCRN, CPN; Chapter President

Ms. Lindsay Ward MSN, CPNP-PC,  
IBCLC; Immediate Past-President

Dr. Samantha Hoffman DNP, MS,  
CPNP-PC; Chapter President-elect

**HB 0915 SENATE FAV FCG OCE LS26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Fitzwater

Position: FAV



**FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

Jessica Fitzwater  
*County Executive*

**HB 915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

**DATE:** April 3, 2026  
**COMMITTEE:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**POSITION:** Favorable  
**FROM:** The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give **HB 915 – Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care** a favorable report.

This legislation creates a state-level workgroup to study resources for youth aging out of foster care to help them achieve self-sufficiency. The proposed workgroup is also tasked with determining the effectiveness of current available resources, and identifying the challenges with current services and programs offered before a youth ages out of the system.

Frederick County is committed to supporting children and equipping them for a successful transition into adulthood. This legislation, which studies resources and programs for foster care youth, would play a crucial role in aiding Frederick, other counties, and the State with planning future programs and resource allocations to ensure that we are fulfilling our mission of assisting youth and their families. The workgroup created through this legislation could also recommend new programs and funding opportunities, further assisting the county in setting our foster care youth up for success.

Frederick County Government supports HB 915 as it prioritizes the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care. We believe that assessing current resources and identifying gaps is critical to helping these young adults achieve self-sufficiency. We welcome opportunities to collaborate and share insights from our work with children, youth, and families. By identifying gaps and improving resources for youth aging out of foster care, we can promote self-sufficiency and stability, which benefits our foster youth and their families, as well as our communities as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 915 and I urge a favorable report.

Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive  
Frederick County, MD

# **NASW Maryland - 2026 HB 915 FAV - Workgroup on Agi**

Uploaded by: Karessa Proctor

Position: FAV



**Testimony Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
April 3, 2026**

**House Bill 915:  
Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

**\*\*SUPPORT\*\***

The National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter represents over 3,000 social workers statewide. We support House Bill 915 as it will create a workgroup to examine existing and best practices, and make recommendations on how Maryland can better support youth aging out of foster care. NASW-Maryland is pleased to be named as a participant in this work.

As a person who spent most of my youth in foster care, I know first-hand how the system does and does not work. Transitioning out of foster care is often marked by isolation, instability, and complexity. The moment youth exit care, the paid supports disappear. During college, I experienced homelessness because I had nowhere to go during academic breaks. I nearly did not complete my undergraduate degree due to profound depression and isolation. I needed stability and support—someone to help hold me up—but instead, I felt discarded and left to navigate adulthood alone. I incurred significant debt to secure housing, a burden I continue to carry today. That debt became yet another barrier to long-term stability.

As a person with lived-experience and a licensed clinical social worker, I strongly support House Bill 915. Maryland needs to do a better job building dignity and stability for young people while they are in the foster care system, and provide better supports as they transition out.

On behalf of NASW Maryland, I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,  
Arielle Skinner, LCSW-C

# **HB915 MALMB Testimony.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Kovacs

Position: FAV



**Local power, collective voice  
for Maryland's children, youth and families**

April 3, 2026

**SUPPORT – HB0915 - Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

Dear Delegates:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards, I am writing in support of **HB0915 - Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care** to establish the Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to identify the types of resources available for youth who have aged out of foster care to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Local Management Boards in each county and jurisdiction in the State of Maryland work in low income neighborhoods to address the needs of children and families in their respective jurisdiction. We work with foster youth who experience many barriers to achieving self-sufficiency. HB0915 seeks to bring 15 young people, ages 18 to 25 who are in the process of or have already aged out of the Maryland foster care system, together in a workgroup with state agencies, service providers, and advocates to identify supportive mechanisms for after leaving the system. It is incredibly important to center youth voice in this conversation to improve the systems that impact them.

**We urge you to support HB0915 - Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care** to identify resources for youth aging out of foster care and identify the challenges of current services and to center youth voice.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Brown, PhD  
Chair

# HB915

Uploaded by: Macy Wilson

Position: FAV

good afternoon my name is macy wilson.

i am here to speak in favor of HB915

the hardest part about foster care isn't being in it, it's what happens after. transitioning out of foster care was one of the hardest things i have ever had to do. it wasn't that i was not ready for the world it was the fact i was just shoved out in the world with no real guidance, check ins or support. i moved around a lot and was not in my home county which was hard because being gone so long things changed. i didn't know where any resources were and i was certainly not given a packet from DHS on recourses in the community to help me with housing, schooling, food and transportation.

i was blind navigating the world once i got out of foster care. this bill would close the gaps on not just my experience, but alot of other child's exit experience as well. making sure that people aren't just dusting their hands once we leave care. making sure we give the kids tool for success is incredibly important and i urge you to vote in favor for this bill.

thank you macy wilson

# **HB0915 - crossover bill - FAV - Workgroup on Aging**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0915\_Crossover\_Bill

RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

04/03/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz Frederick,  
MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL HB#0915- POSITION:**

**FAVORABLE**

**Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of crossover bill HB#0915, **Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

Forever Family has documented the problems and answered the question *What is "Aging Out" of Foster Care?*<sup>1</sup>

Approximately 24,000 American teenagers in foster care turn 18 years old each year. Many still in high school, these teens find themselves in need of jobs, a place to live, and a means of transportation to survive.

National studies have shown that within two to four years of leaving foster care at age 18:

- 40% were homeless
- 40% were receiving public assistance or were incarcerated
- 40% experienced drug or alcohol abuse
- 46% had not finished high school
- 51% were unemployed
- 84% became parents

Maryland's promise is that We Leave No One Behind. If we are to live up to that promise we need to understand the problems that occur when youth age out of foster care and how we can ameliorate and fix those problems to achieve better outcomes.

We can meet that goal by passing this bill to establish the Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to identify the types of resources available for youth who have aged out of foster care to help them achieve self-sufficiency, determine the effectiveness of currently available resources and identify the challenges with current services and programs offered before a youth ages out of the system. We can then require the Workgroup to submit a report of its findings and recommendations by July 1, 2027, to the General Assembly.

That collected data will permit crafting legislation and programs to find solutions to identified issues.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on crossover bill HB#0915.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.foreverfamily.org/aging-out-of-foster-care#:~:text=40%25%20were%20homeless,84%25%20became%20parents>

# **HB915- Maryland Legal Aid - FAV260403 Final Writte**

Uploaded by: Richard Perry

Position: FAV



**HB915-Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**  
**April 3, 2026**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

*Maryland Legal Aid submits written and oral testimony on HB915 at the request of its sponsor, Delegate Terri L. Hill.*

Maryland Legal Aid asks that the Committee report **favorably** on House Bill 915, which would establish a Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to assess the resources available to youth leaving foster care, evaluate the effectiveness of existing services, identify gaps, and recommend reforms to improve outcomes for young people transitioning to adulthood. 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 non-profit law firm, representing vulnerable young people in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) matters across the State. This legislation directly addresses the complex and interconnected challenges that youth aging out of foster care face by establishing a cross-agency, youth-informed Workgroup charged with evaluating and improving the systems that shape their transition to adulthood.

Through its representation of thousands of children and young adults in CINA and related proceedings statewide, Maryland Legal Aid has substantial experience with the challenges youth face as they prepare to leave foster care, including instability in housing, income, health care, education, and supportive adult connections. That experience gives Maryland Legal Aid a well-founded perspective on the needs of transition-age youth and the systemic barriers that too often undermine a successful transition from foster care to adulthood. The scale of the problems facing transition-age youth warrants legislative attention because many Maryland youth who exit foster care report recurring requests for help with rent, food, mental-health services, housing or homeless services, and Medicaid conversion.<sup>1</sup>

First, with respect to housing instability, the bill brings together the Department of Housing and Community Development alongside human services leadership to identify existing housing resources, assess their effectiveness, and uncover gaps that leave young people at risk of homelessness. By requiring a comprehensive review of stable housing and related supports such as transportation and financial resources, the Workgroup will lay the foundation for more coordinated and responsive housing strategies. Housing instability is one of the clearest reasons this legislation is necessary. 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 age twenty-six.<sup>2</sup> Maryland’s own planning materials identify housing, poverty, and behavioral health

<sup>1</sup> Md. Dep’t of Hum. Servs., *Maryland 2025–2029 Child and Family Services Plan* 135–37 (2024).

<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).

as areas requiring stronger intervention.<sup>3</sup> Stable housing is critical because, without it, every other transition objective from employment to education becomes far more difficult to sustain.

Second, in the area of education and employment, the inclusion of the State Superintendent of Schools and the directive to evaluate educational programs and employment support ensures that the Workgroup will examine whether youth are being adequately prepared for academic success and workforce entry. Importantly, the bill goes beyond inventorying services—it requires an assessment of what is actually effective and what youth are most likely to use, increasing the likelihood of meaningful reform. Education and employment challenges further underscore the need for review. The National Youth in Transition Database indicates that by age twenty-one, only 70% of surveyed foster youth had obtained a high school diploma or GED, only 26% were currently enrolled in school, and just 34% reported full-time employment.<sup>4</sup>

Third, regarding mental and behavioral health, the bill includes the Secretary of Health and representatives from the behavioral health and pediatric communities. It requires evaluation of access to physical and behavioral health care services, recognizing that untreated trauma and mental health needs are significant barriers to stability and self-sufficiency for youth leaving care. Health, behavioral-health, and disability-related needs provide additional justification for legislative action. Young people leaving out-of-home care experience significantly poorer health and psychosocial outcomes than their peers.<sup>5</sup> Maryland reports indicate recurring requests from former foster youth and stakeholders for assistance with mental-health services and Medicaid conversion, and identify behavioral health as an area requiring stronger intervention.<sup>6</sup> Maryland also recognizes the need to strengthen coordination with Medicaid and behavioral-health providers, noting that continued access to mental-health, substance-use, and general health care services after foster care is essential for stability and long-term well-being.<sup>7</sup> The State’s planning framework further acknowledges disability-related needs within the foster-care population, including Voluntary Placement Agreements for Children with Disabilities and individualized support services for youth in care.<sup>8</sup> These provisions highlight a critical challenge: when youth exit foster care without a clear pathway for transition into adulthood, health and disability system disruptions are both likely and consequential.

Fourth, the bill addresses the critical issue of lifelong relationships and supportive connections by centering on the voices of young people themselves. By requiring that at least 15 members of the Workgroup be individuals who are currently or formerly in foster care, this bill seeks to ensure

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<sup>3</sup> Md. Dep’t of Hum. Servs., *Maryland 2025–2029 Child and Family Services Plan* 135 (2024).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Health & Hum. Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Children’s Bureau, *Outcomes Data Snapshot: National 2* (2022), <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/nytd-outcomes-md-2021.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> David Taylor et al., Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Policies and Interventions that Improve Health, Psychosocial, and Economic Outcomes for Young People Leaving the Out-of-Home Care System, 32 *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 2696 (2024).

<sup>6</sup> Md. Dep’t of Hum. Servs., *Maryland 2025–2029 Child and Family Services Plan* 135 (2024).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 139–40.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 5.

that recommendations will be informed by lived experience. Additionally, the Workgroup must examine the types of supports youth actually rely on, including trusted adults, peers, and community networks, acknowledging that permanent connections are as essential as formal services. In 2024, 252 Maryland youth left foster care through emancipation, meaning they exited care without reunification, adoption, or guardianship.<sup>9</sup> Maryland’s Child and Family Services Plan further reports that the proportion of older youth aging out of care remains significantly higher than the national average: in 2021, 64.1% of older youth in Maryland aged out of care compared with 35.3% nationally, with youth of color most likely to do so.<sup>10</sup> National data likewise indicates that, by age twenty-one, only 87% of surveyed foster youth reported a connection to a supportive adult, leaving a substantial minority without even that basic form of support during the transition to adulthood.<sup>11</sup> Maryland’s child-welfare framework recognizes that youth require lifelong supports and connections and stronger networks of personal and professional relationships as they move into adulthood.<sup>12</sup> Youth leaving foster care, by contrast, often face an abrupt transition to adulthood with little or no support from either their family or the state.<sup>13</sup> Without a reliable support network, routine setbacks—such as a missed paycheck, lost identification, or temporary housing disruption—can quickly escalate into crises. Youth leaving care should have meaningful access to the mentors, trusted adults, and community support that families typically provide.

Finally, HB 915 recognizes that these challenges for youth do not exist in isolation. By convening a diverse group of stakeholders across government, legal services, advocacy organizations, and youth leaders, and by requiring a report with findings and recommendations, the bill creates a structured, accountable pathway toward improving outcomes in housing, education, employment, mental health, and long-term stability. Youth-informed policy reviews in other jurisdictions demonstrate that coordinated evaluation can identify unmet needs and structural gaps in transition systems. Louisiana established a Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care to examine programs and financing options supporting youth transitioning to independence and included former foster youth; it identified several core needs, including education, housing, adult connections, special-needs services, and aftercare support.<sup>14</sup> The task force recommended coordinated, youth-centered solutions—including one-stop transition centers, extended care to age 21, continuous healthcare coverage, targeted financial and educational supports, specialized case management, and expanded transition services—to address systemic gaps and improve outcomes.<sup>15</sup> New York City similarly convened an Interagency Foster Care Task Force that

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Health & Hum. Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Children’s Bureau, *Child Welfare Outcomes 2024: Maryland*, <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/byState/maryland/>.

<sup>10</sup> Md. Dep’t of Hum. Servs., *Maryland 2025–2029 Child and Family Services Plan* 105, 135 (2024).

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Health & Hum. Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, Children’s Bureau, *Outcomes Data Snapshot: National 2* (2022), <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/nytd-outcomes-national-2021.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Md. Dep’t of Hum. Servs., *Maryland FY 2025 Annual Progress and Services Report* 191 (2024); Independent Living, Md. Dep’t of Hum. Servs., <https://dhs.maryland.gov/out-of-home-care/youth-resources/independent-living/>.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Hous. & Urb. Dev., *Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: A Literature Review* 1 (2014).

<sup>14</sup> H.C.R. 168, 2015 Reg. Sess. 2–3 (La. 2015); La. Dep’t of Child. & Fam. Servs., *Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Final Report* 8–9, 41–42 (Feb. 1, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> La. Dep’t of Child. & Fam. Servs., *supra* note 18, at 49–52.

included current and former foster youth and organized its work around permanency, education, employment, health, and housing. The task force subsequently recommended—and the city implemented—expanded investments in education and employment services and housing priority for eligible youth leaving care.<sup>16</sup> Federal oversight reinforces the importance of such review. The U.S. Government Accountability Office recently found that states offer a range of Chafee-funded transition services, yet federal funds have remained unspent for years despite continuing unmet needs among youth aging out of foster care.<sup>17</sup> A Maryland workgroup would therefore provide a practical mechanism to assess existing supports, identify barriers youth encounter before aging out, ensure that transition services operate effectively in practice, and align policy with the lived experiences of youth who have been in care.

Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 915 and urges its ultimate passage. If you have any questions, please contact: Erica I. LeMon, Advocacy Director for Children’s Rights at [elemon@mdlab.org](mailto:elemon@mdlab.org) (410) 951-7648 or (410) 935-0937.

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<sup>16</sup> N.Y.C. Admin. for Children’s Servs., *Interagency Foster Care Task Force Final Report* 3–4, 6. (Mar. 2020).

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., *Foster Care: HHS Should Help States Address Barriers to Using Federal Funds for Programs Serving Youth Transitioning to Adulthood* 9, 26–27 (2025).

# **HB 915 in JPR- VFC Written Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Serena Lao

Position: FAV



## **VOICES for CHILDREN, INC.**

Howard County's CASA Program | Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

8358 Main St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl. • Ellicott City, MD 21043

410-740-0933 • 410-740-0975 • [www.voicesforchildren.org](http://www.voicesforchildren.org)

**HB 915 (Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care)  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Hearing Date: April 3, 2026  
Position: FAVORABLE**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Voices for Children (VFC), Howard County's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, is in support of HB 915, which establishes a workgroup on aging out of foster care.

Our nonprofit provides trained CASA volunteers for every child who goes through the foster care system in the county. CASAs are community members from all walks of life who care deeply about the wellbeing of children and become a consistent advocate for their assigned youth throughout their time in foster care. We have some incredible, dedicated volunteers who continue to support these young adults in various ways after they age out of care at 21, but their care and capacity is not enough to make up for the inadequacy of resources available to this vulnerable population.

VFC works with county agencies to assist young adults who age out of foster care with obtaining a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) housing voucher, which provides rental assistance based on income. While VFC staff assist FYI voucher recipients to understand the process of finding and maintaining housing, many of these young adults need significant support beyond housing. For example, several young single mothers previously in foster care must juggle obtaining steady employment while making sure their child has reliable childcare. Having a working phone can be a financial challenge and strain but is a prerequisite to applying for any kind of assistance.

Those aging out of care are not monoliths, and the determination of these young adults is inspiring. Many are resilient and motivated to push through the barriers that come with transitioning to adulthood. Some have more personal support than others. But the trauma of abuse and neglect that led to being in foster care, along with the trauma of being in foster care for many, does not end at age 21. Disrupted education, attachment ruptures with caregivers, and overall instability during childhood heavily impacts young people's cognitive abilities. Additionally, those with learning disabilities or mental illness have limitations that often keep them at a disadvantage unless they receive consistent, high-quality services that meet their needs.

The proposed workgroup in this bill would ensure that those directly impacted can give voice to their nuanced experiences and join the table with community partners and agencies to come up with viable solutions. Understanding which resources have led to success is only the first step in making sure this at-risk population gets adequate support in addition to independence beyond their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 915.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Erica B. Byrne in black ink.

Erica B. Byrne, LCSW-C  
Executive Director  
Voices for Children, Inc., Howard County's CASA Program  
8358 Main Street  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
[ebyrne@voicesforchildren.org](mailto:ebyrne@voicesforchildren.org)  
443-878-2962

Handwritten signature of Serena Lao in black ink.

Serena Lao, M.S.  
CASA Case Supervisor  
[slao@voicesforchildren.org](mailto:slao@voicesforchildren.org)

# **HB0915 2026 Previously Fosterd Adults Workgroup S**

Uploaded by: Terri Hill

Position: FAV

**TERRI L. HILL, M.D.**

*Legislative District 12A  
Howard County*

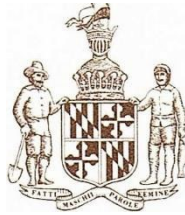
Health and Government Operations Committee

*Subcommittees*

Public Health and Minority Health Disparities, Chair

Elder and Long-Term Care

Maternal, Infant, and Child Health



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## **THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **HB0915- Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care—Amended**

April 3, 2026

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

**House Bill 915** creates a workgroup of human service professionals and foster care participants, advocates, and experts to look at the challenges unique to adults who have aged out of foster care and what successful programmatic models exist that could be implemented in Maryland for giving them the best chance of enjoying social, career, personal, and economic success as adults.

Each year, thousands of Maryland youth age out of foster care and without the sustainable “family” support that most others can rely on in navigating early adulthood. This likely factors significantly in their disproportionately high risks of housing instability, food insecurity, unemployment, untreated physical and behavioral health conditions (including suicide ideation and success), and education shortcomings. While Maryland continues to invest in programs that support youth transitioning out of foster care, there is a notable drop off in adequate, targeted support for.

**HB915** acknowledges that while, at its best, foster care serves as a temporary, short- or long-term, physical, emotional, and psychological refuge, nurturing and support to children experiencing dangerous home situations, it cannot mitigate all of the impacts of a childhood marked in such a way that such intervention is necessary, nor is the foster care system immune from enacting its on traumatic and scaring effects on some of the children in its care. And just as noted in other situations, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) reverberate for decades, if not for a lifetime, regardless of whether the person experiencing it has ever been a recipient of foster services. Given the disproportionate representation of formerly fostered adults and those from kinship home among those struggling to build a stable, self-sufficient, successful life, a closer look at the challenges and potential actionable solutions is indicated.

The **HB915** workgroup would be tasked evaluating the nature, effectiveness, and limitation of existing programs and resources, identify challenges to making successful transition to adulthood prior to, and for the first years after, aging out, and examining the nature, costs, and feasibility of implementing or expanding programs that have been shown to improve outcomes beyond Maryland state and local jurisdictions, such as the use of an anonymous hotline. As it passed the House a \$2,000 stipend is allocated from existing DHS funds to teach of the previously fostered youth workgroup participants. A report with recommendations to guide our efforts in this area would be due by July 2027

I urge a favorable report.

*Terri L. Hill, M.D.*

**HB915\_JPR\_MARFY\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



April 3, 2026

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**House Bill 915 — Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**

**Position:** Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 915.

MARFY represents licensed private child-placing agencies and community-based providers delivering foster care, treatment foster care, group homes, and independent living services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. Our members serve children and youth who have experienced abuse, neglect, complex trauma, and significant behavioral health needs. We work every day with young people preparing to transition from out-of-home placement into adulthood often without the safety net of family support.

[Research shows that things like tuition assistance](#) and housing support grant programs are extremely beneficial to youth-in-foster care as they age out of care; but we also know that there is much left unknown in what these youth need. This is exactly what this bill aims to do – connect the right stakeholders, Departments, and individuals with lived experience to come together to create, collaborate and to report on the State can expand its’ support for these youth.

Too often, young people must navigate complex and disconnected supports at a time when stability is most critical. House Bill 915 presents a thoughtful and necessary step forward. By convening a workgroup that brings together state agencies, providers, advocates, and individuals with lived experience, this legislation creates the structure needed to evaluate current supports, identify gaps, and develop actionable recommendations. Importantly, it centers the voices of those who have experienced foster care firsthand—ensuring that policy solutions are grounded in real-world experience.

This workgroup is not about starting from scratch; it is about aligning and strengthening what already exists while building a more cohesive, responsive system that meets youth where they are. With the right coordination and strategy, Maryland has the opportunity to become a national leader in supporting young people as they transition out of foster care and into stable, successful adulthood.

For these reasons, MARFY respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 915. Thank you for your consideration.

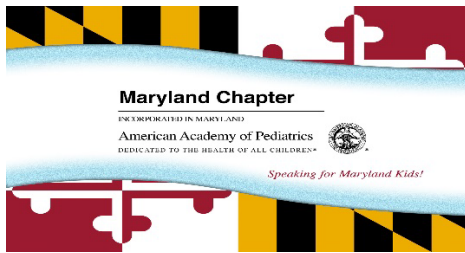
**For more information call or email:**

Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 | [therese@ashlargr.com](mailto:therese@ashlargr.com)

# **HB0915 - Senate\_FAV\_MDAAP\_Workgroup Aging Out of F**

Uploaded by: Wendy Lane

Position: FAV



Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
April 3, 2026  
House Bill 915 – *Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care*  
**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for *House Bill 915: Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care*.

House Bill 915 establishes a workgroup on aging out of foster care that will review existing resources and identify gaps in services related to housing stability, food security, transportation, employment, education, behavioral health, etc. The information gathered will be used to understand how current systems support youth aging out of care, and what improvements are needed. Additionally, the workgroup will identify programs that have successfully improved outcomes for youth aging out of care. Importantly, the workgroup does not just include input from professionals but also includes the voice of young adults with lived experience. This expertise will ensure that recommendations reflect the real barriers that former foster youth face as they enter adulthood.

Successful transition to adulthood requires resources, adult support and guidance, career skills, and knowledge about topics such as budgeting and saving, cooking, and navigating physical and mental health systems. Unfortunately, transition programs have not adequately addressed youth needs and have been particularly lacking in skills, such as engaging in health care and how to develop and maintain healthy relationships.<sup>1</sup> Given that youth transitioning out of foster care are more likely than other youth to have physical and mental health issues and disabilities, and are at increased risk for homelessness and school failure,<sup>2</sup> adequately addressing their needs is vital. For these reasons, the MDAAP urges a favorable report on *House Bill 915: Workgroup on Aging out of Foster Care*.

**For more information call:**

Wendy Lane, MD, MPH

Maryland AAP Secretary/Treasurer and Co-Chair, MDAAP Maltreatment and Foster Care Committee

[wlane@lifebridgehealth.org](mailto:wlane@lifebridgehealth.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Doucet MM, Greeson JKP, Eldeeb N. Independent living programs and services for youth ‘aging out’ of care in Canada and the U.S.: A systematic review. *Child Youth Serv Rev.* 2022;142:106630.

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. *Fostering Health: Health Care for Children and Adolescents in Foster Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2025.

# **HB915testimony.SenateCrossover.pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: FWA

**SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE**  
**HOUSE BILL 915: Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care**  
**April 3, 2026**

**POSITION: Support as amended**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), a nonprofit legal advocacy organization, is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy agency for the state of Maryland, charged with defending and advancing the rights of individuals with disabilities. Over the past 40 years, DRM has dedicated significant resources to representation of foster children with disabilities and to students with disabilities entitled to transition planning for post-secondary life.

DRM supports House Bill 915 as amended. The bill, if enacted, would establish a workgroup to identify the types of resources available for youth who have aged out of foster care to help them achieve self-sufficiency, determine the effectiveness of currently-available resources, and identify the challenges with current services and programs offered before a youth ages out of the system. House Bill 915 would also require the workgroup to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly by July 1, 2027.

Transition services are essential to prepare students with disabilities for post-secondary life. The Maryland foster care system has a significant population of students with disabilities. In the 2021-22 school year, more than 44% of students in foster care had an individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.<sup>1</sup> Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), these students have the right to “a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.”<sup>2</sup> It is important to collect data about transition services and their effectiveness in order to ensure that students with disabilities in foster care receive the appropriate and individualized transition services they are entitled to under the IDEA and to ensure that their exit from the foster care system is well-planned and smooth.

Significantly, the IDEA transition regulations require the IEP team to invite agencies that may be involved after a student exits the education system to participate in the transition planning process. Participation by the student’s local department of social services is important in order

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<sup>1</sup> MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, *December 2023 Legislative Report Maryland Public Schools Students in the State Child Welfare System*, at p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 20 U.S.C. §1400(d).

Disability Rights Maryland, House Bill 915 Testimony for Senate Crossover: April 3, 2026

to identify and implement a holistic approach to supporting the student through transition and afterwards. Otherwise, students risk exit from both the foster care and education systems at the same time with no clear path to life in the community with the supports they need. The gap in transition services for these youth is reflected in housing, employment, and education outcomes.<sup>3</sup> House Bill 915 will ensure that Maryland has the information necessary to change these outcomes for youth in foster care.

House Bill 915 is also consistent with the Maryland General Assembly's commitment to preparing transition-aged students with disabilities with the services needed to be successful in post-secondary life. Maryland has gone beyond federal law by requiring that transition planning for students with disabilities begin at age 14. House Bill 915 will help ensure that the individualized needs of students with disabilities in foster care are addressed in Maryland's efforts to support transition-aged students.

DRM appreciates being included as a workgroup member, allowing us to contribute our expertise in both foster care and disability to the work of the group.

For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 915 and urges a favorable report.

Contact: Leslie Seid Margolis at [lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org) or 443-692-2505 or Brittany Askin at [brittanya@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:brittanya@disabilityrightsmd.org) or 443-692-2525.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2025, across four groups of 21-year-old youth transitioning out of foster care in Maryland, at least 43% of each group were unemployed. See *Youth Transitioning out of foster care: Currently employed part- or full-time KIDS COUNT Data Center*. From 2013-2018, the rates of community college enrollment for youth exiting foster care declined each year. See MARYLAND LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM CENTER, *Foster Care and Higher Education Participation* (2023), at p. 3. Between the last two school years with reported data, there was a 7% decrease in the rate of youth exiting foster care attending a Maryland four-year higher education institution. *Id.* One study found that beyond the first three months of having exited foster care in Maryland, 100% of youth had or were currently experiencing housing instability. See YOUTH REACH MD, *Youth Homelessness Among Foster Care Alumni* at p. 2.

**HB0915\_DHS\_INFO (JPR).pdf**

Uploaded by: Gloria Brown-Burnett

Position: INFO



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

*Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Stacy L. Rodgers, Acting Secretary*

April 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 915 - WORKGROUP ON AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE -  
POSITION: INFORMATION**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information for House Bill 915 (HB 915).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration implements the Out-of-Home Care program, which is affected by HB 915. HB 915 establishes a short-term Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to review the availability, effectiveness, and gaps in services and supports for youth transitioning out of care in Maryland. The findings from this workgroup will influence the practices, procedures, and policies of DHS programs to support youth aging out of foster care.

Youth who age out of foster care experience disproportionately higher rates of housing insecurity, incarceration, joblessness, and substance abuse than their peers who either are in permanent homes or who were never in foster care. To address these inequities, DHS works with our sister agencies to improve interagency collaboration in support of foster youth. We also created the Emerging Adults Workgroup and the State Youth Advisory Board to ensure foster youth are engaged and empowered.

HB 915 would establish a new Workgroup on Aging Out of Foster Care to assess and report for a period of one year and one month. The findings from the Workgroup could provide further insight into the observed statistics, helping DHS better support youth who age out of foster care. The bill proposes to codify practices that DHS already implements through interagency collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and the

State/Local Youth Advisory Boards. Research finds that [extended, continuous, well-coordinated supports](#) protect youth aging out of care from homelessness and incarceration.

DHS is particularly interested that the workgroup envisioned by HB 915 would include individuals “who are at least 18 years old and under the age of 25 years, who... have aged out of foster care... are currently aging out of foster care; or are members of the Department of Human Services’ Youth Advisory Board.” The opinions and lived experiences of these young people will provide invaluable insights to the workgroup, and we commend their involvement in this process.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at [justin.hayes1@maryland.gov](mailto:justin.hayes1@maryland.gov).

In service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Brown Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gloria Brown Burnett  
Deputy Secretary for Operations