



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

*Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary*

February 19, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
100 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 570 - FOSTER CARE – ADJACENT COUNTY APPLICANTS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 570 (HB 570).

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 Service Administration (SSA) implements the Out-of-Home (OOH) placement program which is affected by HB 570. HB 570 would permit prospective resource parents to apply to Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) in adjacent jurisdictions, and require each LDSS to report the number of children awaiting placements and the number of vacant placements in the jurisdiction on a quarterly basis.

Authorizing applicants to be resource parents who reside in one jurisdiction to apply to adjacent jurisdictions to be resource parents is unnecessary. Today, resource parents work directly with the LDSS in the jurisdiction where they reside. The Department prioritizes placing children in proximity to their community and school but there are scenarios in which a child may be placed outside of their domicile jurisdiction. In instances where there are no placements that meet the child's needs in the child's domicile jurisdiction, local departments collaborate with adjacent jurisdictions to find

alternative placements for a child. Current practice is focused on the needs of the child, not on the needs of potential resource parents.

While the resource home licensing process is overseen by SSA, the twenty four local jurisdictions recruit, license, and retain their resource homes independently from one another. HB 570 is unworkable because it would require the LDSS in each of Maryland's twenty-four jurisdictions to process applications from prospective resource parents in adjacent jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have only one adjacent jurisdiction, while others have as many as six. Most jurisdictions have multiple adjacent jurisdictions, leading to an unmanageable increase in the number of resource parent applications to process in a single LDSS with many adjacent jurisdictions. Furthermore, licensed homes need ongoing support and license oversight. A jurisdiction with a smaller population and fewer staff will need additional resources to support and provide oversight for homes in their jurisdiction serving children from adjacent jurisdictions. More resources would be required to equip each LDSS to process additional applications and home licenses, and support licensed resource homes.

The bill would also create an incentive for potential resource parents to rate-peek because not all jurisdictions provide the same out-of-home care board rate. Differential board rates are offered to offset the higher cost of living in a jurisdiction. Any home licensed through these jurisdictions is eligible to receive the differential board rate. Paying the board rate for a neighboring jurisdiction would increase the cost of care stipend in jurisdictions that have a lower rate. HB 570 may lead to an increase in the number of applicants from adjacent jurisdictions seeking higher board rates.

In addition, licensing resource homes outside of one's jurisdiction could lead to an increase in placing youth in out-of-home care outside their domicile jurisdiction. Greater distance between children and their school, community, and family would require additional staffing to support family reunification efforts and facilitate the child's existing connections. It is typically in the child's best interest to stay as close as possible to their community, family, and educational setting whenever possible. If situations arise where a child's needs can't be met in a child's domicile jurisdiction the Department already has the authority and a process to place the child in a neighboring jurisdiction. Today, a licensed resource parent can already provide care for any youth from any of the state's twenty-four jurisdictions if their home is the placement that best meets the needs of the child. HB 570 would codify a new, unnecessary, and inefficient authority for potential resource parents to apply for licensure outside of their own jurisdiction.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide unfavorable testimony 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 black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López  
Secretary